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CCA NEWS



All will see God's salvation!—Luke 3:6

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This will be the last editorial I will be writing for *CCA News*. At the end of the year 2000 I will be ending my term as General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia and will be returning to the Philippines to start my 'retirement' from active work in the ecumenical movement.

It does not seem so long since I started travelling the ecumenical path. This beginning in fact took place at one of the final preparatory meetings, held in Bangkok in 1956, that paved the way for the founding of the East Asia Christian Conference. That was over forty years ago. Along the way there were marvellous moments in ecumenical time, moments of encounter with the challenges of the mission, unity and renewal of the church. There were, to use Charles Dickens' words, 'the best of times' in an ecumenical journey that visited many places, met many people and shared many meetings. There were however also the 'worst of times' as many ecumenical institutions deteriorated and decayed and as many people and the ecumenical instruments that they helped to build passed away or have been left behind by the ever-accelerating passage of time and history. In between, there have been eleven General Assemblies of CCA, the first of which was held in Prapat, Indonesia, and the last in Tomohon, also in Indonesia.

Many have said that Tomohon could be a new beginning for the ecumenical movement in Asia. That of course remains to be seen, and much will depend on the resolve that the next line of CCA leadership will devote to make it happen. In early December the General Committee of CCA met in Hong Kong to begin a new term and to continue the consolidation of the decisions taken in Tomohon. This included decisions about structure, about program areas and priorities and about staff. By the beginning of 2001, the new General Secretary will assume his responsibilities. Meanwhile I will be returning to the Philippines to begin life in retirement with family, friends, many books to read and maybe one or two to write, and a lot of stories to tell.

I write this last editorial as we prepare for the celebration of the last Christmas of the millennium. It is good to be able to say not only 'goodbye' but also best wishes for this very special season of grace, with its call to remembrance of all that God has done 'for us and our salvation' and all of its hopes for new beginnings.

Feliciano V. Cariño



Suyin, Theresa and Feliciano Cariño at the farewell dinner given by the General Committee

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Decade to Overcome Violence

Asian launch in Indonesia of WCC undertaking attended by inter-religious representatives

The Asian launch of the 'Decade to Overcome Violence' was held in Malang, East Java, Indonesia, on 18 November 2000. 'DOV'—as the program is more widely known—is one of the major undertakings that the World Council of Churches (WCC) has drawn up as a focus of ecumenical attention and common action in this decade. It is the major area of work around which the program emphasis on 'peace and reconciliation' will be undertaken in the years ahead.

The launch in Malang was sponsored and jointly attended by representatives of the WCC, the Christian Conference of Asia, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI) and the Nahdatul Ulama (NU), one of the largest Muslim organisations in Indonesia. In fact it was held in a *pesantren* (a traditional Muslim educational centre) of the NU in Malang, and was attended

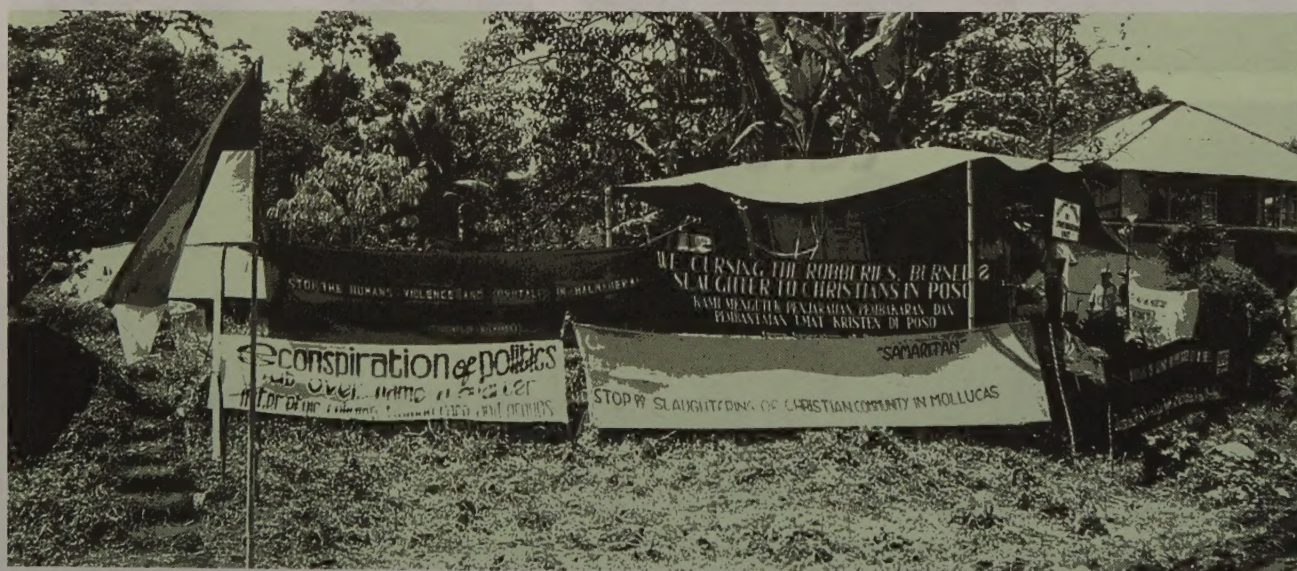
by representatives and participants from other religious bodies in Indonesia. It was preceded by an inter religious seminar on 'Peace and Reconciliation', which was also attended by representatives of other religious bodies in Indonesia. Equally important is that the Central Committee meeting of CCI was also held in Malang immediately after the launch. Hence DOV was nestled in an ambit of inter-religious dialogue and relationships and the highest-level gathering of the Christian churches in Indonesia.

The inter-religious character of the launch was very important. One of the speakers in the program noted that peace and reconciliation in Indonesia and in other parts of Asia cannot be viewed and undertaken only as a 'Christian project'. Unless it is born and nurtured within inter-religious

dialogue, understanding and cooperation it cannot be achieved.

Hashim Muzadi, the national president of Nahdatul Ulama, made one of the major presentations at the launch. The President of CCI, the Rev. Dr Natan Setiabudi, and its General Secretary, the Rev. Dr I.P. Lambe, were in attendance. The WCC was represented by Dr Fernando Enns, a member of the theological faculty of the University of Heidelberg in Germany, the Rev. G. Divasyrvadam, the General Secretary of the Church of South India, both members of the WCC's Central Committee, and Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the WCC's Executive Secretary for Asia Relations. Dr Feliciano V. Cariño, represented CCA. Dr Wismoady Wahono, the Moderator of the East Java Christian Church, was moderator of the program.

Feliciano Cariño



Entering a Non-violent Era

Statement on Indonesian reconciliation by an inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-racial group

We, a group of an inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-racial participants, have just held a seminar and workshop on reconciliation in Indonesia. The aim of our assembly, held in Malang, East Java, on 16–18 November 2000, was to struggle against the multi-dimensional problems that have occurred in our beloved country. Our preliminary statement is as follows:

- In the past three years, violence has caused not only the loss of many lives but also social damage to the Indonesian people, in their communities as well as in the nation as a whole. This violence, which has occurred almost in every sector and has appeared in many ways and character, is a human tragedy.
- Terrorism, with bomb blasts causing loss of life and property, has brought about a situation of social instability and has threatened the peace and integrity of our community.
- This situation has unfortunately developed a culture of violence, among both the political–social elite and people at the grassroots, as demonstrated by words of abuse in communication, threats and terror.
- Violence and the unfair treatment of women have brought uncertainty to law and social welfare, especially in women's workplaces.
- Inside the family wives are often treated unfairly by husbands, and

Religions, and the values taught by religions, offer an appropriate and right solution to the crisis in every sector, since every religion teaches peace, love and an appreciation of human rights and human dignity

children show the effects of violence.

- Unfair treatment has also been given to youth, the poor and the marginalised, as well as to women.
- In many conflicts, religious symbols have been used as tools to provoke others. In refugee camps people are suffering from hunger and fear. These are violations of human rights and human dignity.

Facing these facts, we believe that:

- violence, in its many forms, contradicts the values of every religion;
- religions, and the values taught by religions, offer an appropriate and right solution to the crisis in every sector, since every religion teaches peace, love and an appreciation of human rights and human dignity;
- basically, all people, including the Indonesian people, are peace-loving people.

Based on these opinions, we have decided, hand in hand, to call for the implementation of peace for all Indonesian people, as well as for all hu-

man beings. We call for:

- a unity of vision and mission, based on and motivated by religious values, in order to give of our best in the building up of a non-violent society;
- the building up and maintenance of an inter-ethnic, inter-religious and inter-racial forum, right down to the lowest level of the society, in order to build mutual and deep understanding for a genuine relationship based on a fair and civilised humanity, love for each other and appreciation of human dignity, to gain the best conduct for the benefit and happiness of all;
- the formulating and performing of activities, hand in hand, to help each other to be free from poverty and underdevelopment, for the realisation of building up a stronger, democratic, peaceful and prosperous civil society.

May God, the supreme being and the greatest creator of all, help us. Amen.

On behalf of the participants:

Alhaj Hawari Lubis
Rev. Prof. Dr Sri Wisnadi Wahono
Alhaj Dino Sumrapno, SH
Rev. Dr A.A. Yewangoe
Drs Permadi, SH
Rev. Dr I.P. Lambe
Mr Hanum Pramana
Fr I. Ismartono, SJ
Drs Suwondo

International Peace Mission

Efforts to end the conflict in Mindanao by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) conducted an International Peace Mission in Mindanao on 10–11 September 2000. The team was composed of international peace advocates from NCCP's overseas partners, who have long been concerned about the situation in the Philippines and who support the peace initiatives of the churches.

The peace mission was occasioned by the eruption of conflict in Mindanao following the Philippine President's declaration of an all-out war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a revolutionary army of the Bangsa Moro people.

Participants

Dr Clement John, WCC
 Rev. Dr Daniel Thiagarajah, CCA
 Dr Victor Hsu, NCCC-USA
 Rev. Fr Brian Grieves, ECUSA
 Mr Johnny Thorsen, NCA
 Mr Oystein Tveter, DIS
 Ms Chris Vertucci, Mennonite Central Committee
 Rev. Kim Dong Wan, NCCK
 Joined by NCCP Peace Committee and several heads of churches

The team visited evacuation centres where thousands of displaced people have sought shelter due to heavy

bombing of their villages by government forces.

The peace advocates were brought face to face with the dehumanising living conditions in the centres, where there is very little to live on.

A subgroup of the International Peace Mission paid a call on Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, and exchanged concerns about the Mindanao situation and President Joseph Estrada's leadership. They expressed their sentiments about the government's approach to resolving the conflict in the south and encouraged the cardinal to continue his efforts at issuing pastoral statements to his flock and giving impetus to public demonstrations against the worsening political and economic situation. They were assured by him that the churches, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, were lending support to the people's movement that was taking the President to task. The group also spent a few hours at the Payatas dump site, the mountain of garbage which caved in on 10 July 2000. They saw the extent of the damage and what was being done to rehabilitate the area. They then talked with community organisers who are helping to rebuild people's lives. The international peace advocates also paid a courtesy call on Vice President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who listened to the concerns of the group and promised to relay them to the President and the National Security Council.



Some of the participants at the International Peace Mission in Mindanao

Voters' Rights in Pakistan

Minorities consider boycott of elections under separate electorates

Leaders of religious minorities in Pakistan are considering a boycott of the next elections if joint electorates are not restored in the country. Bishop Samuel Robert Azariah of Raiwind, Moderator of the Church of Pakistan, said that 'religions should not be used as a means to create division among the people of God'.

The bishop was among representatives of mainstream churches—the Catholic Church, the Church of Pakistan and the Salvation Army of Pakistan—who discussed the government's new local bodies Election Plan 2000. The discussion was organised by the National Commission for Justice and Peace.

There are currently two separate categories of voters in Pakistan: the Muslim majority, which forms 97 per cent of the population, and the 3 per cent who are non-Muslims.

Muslims vote for Muslim candidates in geographic constituencies, while minority members vote for a few seats reserved for their groups as

provincewide or nationwide constituencies.

Church of Pakistan Bishop Alexander John Malik of Lahore said that separate electorates are detrimental to national integration and people would be forced to boycott it if the next elections were held on a separate basis.

Father Emmanuel Yousaf, administrator of the Lahore archdiocese, said that religious minorities contributed to the creation and building of Pakistan, and that they will not accept any formula of representation that reduced their status as Pakistani citizens. 'The whole discourse of rights is based on the equality of human beings. The government should clarify if they believe in rights or not,' he added.

Farooq Tariq, secretary general of the Labour Party of Pakistan called for the immediate restoration of the original 1973 Pakistan constitution and pushed for a free and fair election on the basis of adult franchise.

'The government has weakened and failed because it bowed to the pres-

ures of religious extremist parties,' he noted.

Cecil Chaudhry, executive secretary of the National Christian Action Forum, called the separate electorate system a form of 'religious apartheid in the political order of Pakistan'.

A resolution adopted at the discussion demanded the abolition of separate electorates and the immediate restoration at all levels of the joint electorate system as enshrined in the original 1973 Pakistan constitution.

In Multan, some 250 Christian and Muslim men, women and children held a peaceful rally on 12 September for the restoration of the joint electorate system.

A protest action was led by Syed Sajad Hyder Zadi, president of Amnesty International of Pakistan, and started at the Nawan Shar Chouk and ended at the Press Club of Multan. A speaker said that the participation of Christians and Muslims in the demonstration was proof of Pakistanis' desire for joint electorates.

On 12–13 September participants shared their experiences and heard Dr. Robinson Montalba on the national situation, Dr. Carol Araullo on the prospects of the peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front, and NCCP General Secretary Ms Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes on NCCP's comprehensive peace program, identifying areas

where the international peace advocates could support NCCP.

The conference ended with a press conference where the IPM issued a statement on their impression of the overall peace situation in the Philippines. It expressed a strong call for the President to drop his militarist approach to the Mindanao conflict and pursue a path to peace through uncon-

ditional peace negotiations. The IPM confirmed the analysis that the Mindanao conflict is not a war between Muslims and Christians but an economic and political issue that stems from the Bangsa Moro peoples' legitimate demands for self-determination, respect for their ancestral domain and basic human rights.

Daniel Thiagarajah

Don't Forget East Timor

The struggle to develop the country and to establish a good government in a new nation

A year after the departure of Indonesian troops, East Timor is still devastated by the violence inflicted by the troops and militia groups that opposed the territory's independence, according to Francisco de Vasconcelos, the newly elected moderator of the Protestant Church in East Timor. Christians in the region were grateful, De Vasconcelos told Ecumenical News International, for the support of churches around the world for moves to have a referendum in East Timor over the question of sovereignty. The East Timorese voted for independence and their Indonesian rulers and the militia groups that opposed independence were eventually forced out, leaving a trail of destruction behind them.

But if the international community, churches included, thought that the story was over and that they could now forget about East Timor, they were wrong, he insisted. 'The struggle isn't over,' De Vasconcelos said in an interview at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, where he was attending a gathering of Asian church representatives hosted by the World Council of Churches. 'We had one struggle, but now we have a new struggle—to develop the country and to establish a good government without corruption and with respect for civil society. We need overseas support, both moral and financial, to repair our future, especially with the education of the young. We want to establish a country with

If the international community, churches included, thought that the story was over and that they could now forget about East Timor, they are wrong

justice and democracy, but we cannot have democracy for the people if there is no education.'

De Vasconcelos himself was the subject of intense media interest in September last year when it was reported that he had been killed by anti-independence militia. In fact, together with 200 people who had been sheltering in his church in Dili, he had fled to the mountains to escape the violence. He then heard reports of his own death on the radio

Now, a year after its liberation, De Vasconcelos describes East Timor as a country devastated by last year's events.

The rural population is struggling to work its land as many of the departing Indonesian troops destroyed everything in sight. 'Many of the farmers use the simplest of tools, and the tools were destroyed when the Indonesians burnt their houses down,' he said. 'They also killed the buffaloes [used for ploughing].'

In the capital, Dili, the residents are overwhelmed, according to De Vasconcelos, by the huge number of United Nations personnel—now running East Timor—and by staff from non-governmental organisations who are there to provide aid.

While there had been occasional misunderstandings between foreigners and locals, the East Timorese were not



Rev. Francisco M. de Vasconzales

Koreans in Japan

Symposium looks at migrant workers issues and the church's response

The 8th International Symposium on the Aliens Registration Laws in Japan was held in the Onyang hot spring area, Korea, 30 October – 1 November 2000. The symposium was organised jointly by the Human Rights Commission of NCC-Korea, the Commission on Human Rights in NCC-Japan and the National Network for the Aliens Registration Laws in Japan. Originally the symposiums mainly concentrated on the finger printing issue for Koreans in Japan, but concerns have now expanded to include migrant workers in Asia.

About sixty-five participants from Korea and Japan attended. About thirty were from Japan, including Reiko Suzuki, Moderator of NCC-Japan, Rev. Kang Young-Il, General Secretary of the

Korean Christian Church in Japan, and Fr Kenzo Kimura, General Secretary of the Commission on Peace and Justice of the Roman Catholic Church in Japan. Others represented various networks in Korea, including Rev. Kim Dong Wan, General Secretary of NCC-Korea.

Ahn Jae Woong from CCA presented the keynote paper, giving an overview of the present status of Christian communities in Asia and how we should respond as Christians in the new century. Prof. Lim Tae Soo led the Bible studies on the minority question. Rev. Kang Young-Il and Sato Nobuyuki made presentations on Koreans in Japan with reference to their legal status as well as their present and future problems as aliens in Japan. Reiko

Suzuki gave a testimony on the historical responsibility and the role of the church in Japan. Rev. Yang Mi-Kang presented detailed information about the comfort women's cases. Rev. Watanabe Hidetoshi, United Church of Christ in Japan, Kim Sung Won, Korean Christian Centre in Osaka, Japan, and Fr Lee Jung-Ho, Anglican Church in Korea, gave presentations on the plight of the migrant workers in Korea and Japan.

An eight-point joint declaration on minority issues, Aliens Registration Laws issues, migrant workers issues and churches' responses was unanimously adopted by all participants. The next meeting will be convened in Japan in 2002.

Ahn Jae Woong

complaining about the presence of the foreigners, he said. International businesses and individuals wanting to set up businesses had also arrived in Dili. De Vasconcelos said that the local people did not mind, but he added that 'we want to know how they can help train our people to run businesses, so that we can be involved. The biggest problem in Dili is unemployment, especially among young people.'

Of another major problem facing East Timor—the fate of an estimated 120,000 East Timorese still in Indonesian-controlled West Timor—De Vasconcelos said that pressure should be applied on the Indonesian govern-

ment to sort out who among the refugees wanted to return to East Timor. De Vasconcelos explained that the refugees, who fled East Timor during last year's violence, were divided into those who had supported independence and those who wanted autonomy while still remaining part of Indonesia.

Difficulties faced by those refugees who wanted to return but could not—many fear the presence of pro-Indonesia militia near the border with East Timor—continued also to cause anxiety for those in East Timor who wanted their relatives to return home safely. The international media have carried

reports for most of this year claiming that militia groups in West Timor have been terrorising refugees. The issue came to a head in September when three United Nations aid workers in West Timor were killed, allegedly at the hands of the militia. The UN then withdrew its aid workers and applied pressure on Indonesia to disarm the militias. Despite a deadline imposed by Indonesia for the handover of weapons, Peter Kessler, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said late in September: 'The level of these voluntary surrenders of weapons has been quite pathetic.'

Edmund Doogue, ENI

Asia Pacific Leaders Meet in China

Ecumenical leaders challenge churches to take prophetic stance against globalisation

Members of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Asia and Pacific regional groups have highlighted the negative impact of globalisation in their regions, stating that most Asian and Pacific countries face an increasingly explosive social, economic and political situation as globalisation brings new forms of exploitation, dependence and greater impoverishment to a larger number of people.

Meeting together in Shanghai and Nanjing in the People's Republic of China, 1–16 November, the two groups witnessed the effects of a dramatic modernisation and industrialisation process in this part of China.

For participants, the setting highlighted the negative social, economic and political impact of globalisation in their countries, experienced especially in the unequal distribution of wealth, inter-religious tensions and violence, cultural and environmental destruc-

tion and political instability. In response to this challenge, the groups issued a joint communiqué challenging churches in the region to take up their prophetic role of denouncing disastrous policies as well as undertaking educational campaigns, peace-building initiatives, inter-religious dialogue and action.

The main tasks of the regional groups are to identify critical issues facing churches in their context and to help set priorities for ecumenical work in their region for the next three years.

As specific program priorities, members of the Pacific Ecumenical Regional Group identified the need for the church to revisit its role as a servant church in Pacific communities. Tensions between international standards for human rights and cultural rights, particularly in relation to the rights of indigenous people, poverty eradication and integral human devel-

opment are also priority areas for regional ecumenical action.

The Asia Regional Group noted that ecumenical work in the region should address issues of sustainable development and the relationship of faith and economic life, capacity-building for church and ecumenical organisations, ecumenical formation and the development of a new generation of leaders, children and religious activism.

Members of the regional groups include representatives of Asian and Pacific regional ecumenical organisations, national councils of churches, non-governmental organisations, member churches and mission partners.

The Pacific Ecumenical Regional Group also includes representatives of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Pacific who are part of ecumenical organisations in the region. The joint meeting of the regional groups occurs every three years. WCC

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Know the Bible

Christians in Indonesia urged to make biblical values the norm for daily living

Catholic and Protestant Scripture theologians have urged Christians in Indonesia to broaden their knowledge of the Bible and base their life on biblical values. The 300 participants in a seminar on 'Knowing the Bible' in Jakarta, under the auspices of the Protestant Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia (LAI, Indonesian Biblical Association), encouraged Christians to join the ecumenical movement and make the Bible a basis for Christian unity.

Jesuit Father Thom Jacobs, a theology lecturer at Sanata Dharma Catholic University in Yogyakarta in central Java gave a Catholic perspective. He told Christians to broaden their knowledge of the Bible and enrich their life with biblical values.

'The holy book should inspire Christians to live a moral and dignified life,' he said. He called Christians to an intensified biblical apostolate, starting with their local community. He noted that the features of biblical apostolate became clearer in relation to the 'new evangelisation' that Pope John Paul II proposed in his meeting with the Latin American bishops in 1983. 'New evangelisation,' he said, 'includes efforts at offering, introducing and making Jesus' Good News and biblical values penetrate all aspects of life.'

Furthermore, it 'aims to deepen the faith of Christians, to create a new culture which is open to the evangelical message and to promote social change



Enter the new millennium with a spirit of repentance and a commitment to live a new life that is inspired by the Bible

in the spirit of the Gospel,' Fr Jacobs said. 'The Bible,' he said, 'is not a book of theology, nor a religion textbook, but primarily an expression of faith of the Israelites and of the ancient church. To make people participate in the faith experience is the aim of the biblical apostolate.'

Fr Jacobs observed that the Bible is increasingly appreciated by Catholics, but also noted that many have not made it their norm for living. He advised Christians to make the Bible's teachings on universal values the basis for ecumenical dialogue among themselves, or dialogue with people of other religions.

The Bible remains a 'difficult' book to many because it comes from a totally different time and culture, he said, urging 'efforts to inculturate the Bible,

either through a new translation or other exercises and activities'. Failure to inculturate could only lead to fundamentalism.

He said that deeper knowledge of the Bible should not lead people to be 'fanatic and exclusive, but to be more open and caring for others. For the Bible to remain the bearer of Good News, it must be continuously reformulated into the people's language and culture.' Biblical studies should not end merely with the translation of the Scriptures, but should include a guide to help people read, understand and reflect on the Bible. In his view, Christian spirituality integrates all aspects of Christianity, which include prayer, liturgy, solidarity, evangelisation, catechesis, dialogue and social involvement. Father Jacobs expressed the hope that Indonesian Christians enter the new millennium with a spirit of repentance and a commitment to live a new life that is inspired by the Bible. At the same gathering, Reverend Robert Setio, a Protestant theologian from the Satya Wacana School of Theology in Salatiga, also in central Java, told participants that the challenges facing Christians now and in the future require a strong partnership between Catholics and Protestants.

Since 1977 the Catholic Church in Indonesia has been celebrating national Bible Sunday on the first Sunday of September with varied Bible apostolate programs that often take almost the whole month. *UCA News*

Lay Formation and Leadership

International ecumenical workshop on lay training in Asian churches

An international ecumenical workshop with the theme 'Approaches to Lay Formation and Leadership in Asian Churches' brought together twenty-eight participants, both Catholics and Protestants, from eight countries: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam and Singapore. Held 3–9 October 2000 at the Bayview Park Hotel in Manila, the workshop was coorganised by the China Ecumenical Network (CEN) and the Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA). Most of the participants are actively involved in lay formation and lay training in their respective countries, either in seminaries or training institutes. The workshop was aimed at strengthening these efforts through the sharing of experiences, insights and practices in different Asian countries and to promote further international ecumenical networking and exchange among churches in China and in Southeast Asia.

Challenges of the New Millennium

In his keynote address on 'Challenges to Asian churches in the New Millennium', Dr Feliciano Cariño, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, outlined the pressures and challenges posed by the 'rapidity and encompassing character of change taking place in Asia' today. These changes affect most the laity 'who spend their lives not in the sanctuar-

ies of the church but in the open corridors of life in the world'. Dr Cariño noted that the start of the new millennium also brings to a close the age of Western dominance over Asia. What, he asked, are the implications of that for the church in Asia today? As Asia embarks on a new era that promises greater prosperity for nations and

The rapidity and encompassing character of change taking place in Asia today affect most the laity, who spend their lives not in the sanctuaries of the church but in the open corridors of life in the world

societies, what contributions can churches make to this process? At the same time, Dr Cariño noted, Asia is experiencing new flashpoints of conflict revolving around religion and ethnicity. These conflicts, some of which have generated great violence and suffering, challenge the church to take up the task of building the foundations for peace and reconciliation. In meeting these challenges, Dr Cariño stressed the need to expand ecumenical fellowships and to affirm the unity of the church through new, ecumenical, broadly inclusive structures.

Ecumenical Perspective

Speaking on 'Lay Formation: Notes from an Ecumenical Perspective', Sr Theresa Chu Mei-fen from Beijing pointed out that 'the political dimension of faith' was often missing in the process of lay formation. She stressed that there is an artificial division of the spiritual and the temporal. Having a theological education that provides an opening to the political dimension is thus an urgent need, especially in the context of China. Sr Theresa also expressed the need to have a theology for post-revolutionary China, a theology of reconciliation, distilled from the collective memory and experiences of Chinese Christians. She proposed a 're-reading of the past together' not only among Chinese Catholics but also with Chinese Protestants.

A Broader Context

Participants were challenged to approach lay formation in a broader context rather than in terms of simply training laity to assist priests or pastors. Exploring the theme from a biblical perspective, Dr Minda Peranginangin of Indonesia noted that the term 'lay' does not adequately describe the concept of *laos*, the people of God. Rather than 'lay' formation, she suggested focusing on 'Christian' formation in a larger context that includes life in the church, at home and in society. This way, 'the people called can be God's witness to the world, to be salt and light in and to the world'.

Ecumenism and an Asian Theology

Taking part for the first time in an international ecumenical gathering, many of the participants found the experience warm and enriching. One Chinese participant candidly noted that while Catholic and Protestant leaders related to one another at the national level, congregations at the grassroots often refuse to have any mutual contact.

It underscored the need to have more ecumenical gatherings at the local level. Visits to the East Asian Pastoral Institute (EAPI) at Ateneo University, the Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music (AILM) and St Andrew's Seminary (Episcopalian) confirmed both the need for more ecumenical sharing and the need to construct an Asian theology using Asian resources and culture. In many parts of Asia, where Christians are a minority, Christianity is still regarded as a 'foreign' or 'Western' religion. At EAPI, participants met with lay students from many different parts of Asia, while at AILM they were treated to a delightful program of choral and liturgical music using Asian musical instruments.

Participants shared a wide and colourful variety of experiences in lay training and formation. In China, where the Catholic church records at least 60,000 baptisms a year, parish councils have been set up and lay representatives do participate in parish administration. In some areas, there are diocesan pastoral centres for the formation of lay leaders.

There are also basic organisations in churches that build networks and help mobilise people for church services and other activities. Professor Zhao Zhi En from Nanjing Seminary

espoused briefly on Chinese contributions to Asian theology. He said that while justice and righteousness is important, Christ came not to punish human beings. God is a loving God, rather than a punishing one. He pointed out that people are created by God in the image of God and that salvation is part of creation.

Keo Serey Vuthy of Cambodia described how at the end of the Pol Pot regime there were only 200 Christians left in the country. The dearth of trained clergy meant that lay people had to take on leadership in the church. This struck a chord with Chinese participants who had experienced religious suppression during the Cultural Revolution. Fr Joseph Loc of Vietnam emphasised the role and importance of youth in lay formation. It was also learned that while the Catholic church was officially recognised in

Vietnam, the same was not true of the Protestant churches. In Myanmar, a resurgence of Buddhism was being encouraged by the state. The need to deepen the nationalistic spirit in the church was expressed. The issue of nationalism and religious faith in both Myanmar and China was raised.

At the end of the workshop, there was a call for an effective and holistic lay formation program that would develop skills for contextual analysis of Asian situations, rooted in the basic needs of lay people. There was a call for the sharing of resources, the exchange of resource persons, publications and networking. Participants affirmed the need to advocate ecumenical understanding—not only through dialogue with other Christians but also with people of other faiths.

Theresa Cariño

CEN and ATESEA

The China Ecumenical Network (CEN) is an informal international and ecumenical network of people from church and church-related organisations that are engaged in work with churches in China.

It traces its roots to the Ecumenical China Study Liaison Group (ECSLG) in the early 1970s. In 1993 an international ecumenical meeting was held in Manila on the theme 'Living the Gospel in Society', involving thirty-four people from twelve countries. At the end of the meeting, the China Ecumenical Network (CEN) was formed to carry on initiatives involving both Protestant and Catholic churches in China.

Formed in 1957, ATESEA (Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia) has eighty-one member institutions all over Southeast Asia. The association runs programs designed to meet the needs of theological education in the region, including faculty exchanges, theological study institutes and experiments in innovative and alternative patterns of theological education. It promotes the development of a contextual and Asian-oriented theology.

New General Committee Meets

The new CCA General Committee elected at the Tomohon Assembly in June 2000, held its first meeting on 1–3 December 2000 at the International House, YMCA Hong Kong. All twenty-four members were present except the representative from Laos. The meeting discussed in depth the mandate of the General Assembly and prepared the ground for the work of CCA in the coming five years.

The meeting received with appreciation the reports of the outgoing General Secretary, Dr Feliciano Cariño, highlights of program implementation June–December 2000 by Dr Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang, Associate General Secretary for Program Coordination, and finance, presented by Dr Ahn Jae Woong, Associate General Secretary for Finance.

The General Committee underlined the urgency of the implementation of the new structure adopted in Tomohon and highlighted the program thrusts and priorities for the General Secretariat and the three new program areas.

Reappointment of Staff

It was clearly understood that the Program Areas of the CCA approved by the General Assembly in Tomohon are not 'clusters' of the old program units but newly delineated and identified program areas where old programs may be integrated and new ones may be developed. As a result, the old program units, committees and their staff no longer exist. In view of this, the present CCA Executive Staff will be 're-

appointed' as joint executive secretaries of the program areas to which they will be designated. This implements the principles of sharing, collegiality and joint work that are underscored in the new CCA program structure.

The following designations were adopted:

- Joint Executive Secretaries for Faith, Mission and Unity: Dr Daniel S. Thiagarajah and the Rev. Josef P. Widyatmadja.
- Joint Executive Secretaries for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service: Dr Prawate Khid-arn and Mr Tony Waworuntu.
- Joint Executive Secretaries for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment: Ms Corazon Tabing-Reyes and Ms Cynthia Yuen.

It is understood that in the above reappointments, current terms of appointment, including remuneration and other benefits and length of service of the staff are not changed. These arrangements have been discussed with all executive staff, and have their unanimous agreement.

The new CCA program structure suggested that one of the associate general secretaries should be assigned to take responsibility on finance and the other one for relationships and communication. It is now assumed that program coordination shall be part of the responsibility of the General Secretary. Noting the urgency and importance of work that needs to be done in the area of relationships and communication and the wide gap of time be-

fore the position can be effectively filled, the General Committee approved the decision of the Executive Committee to appoint Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang as Interim Associate General Secretary for Relationships and Communication.

Guidelines for New Program Area Committees

In the light of Assembly mandate, the General Committee developed guidelines for the new program area committees. These guidelines will be shared and used by the program area committees during their first meeting, scheduled to be held in Bangkok at the last week of February 2001.

CCA General Secretaries

The General Committee held a farewell dinner for Dr Feliciano Cariño, who will complete his term as General Secretary by the end of 2000. He intends to 'retire' and return to the Philippines soon. On behalf of the General Committee, Rev. Kenichi Otsu expressed a word of appreciation for the contribution of Dr Cariño to the life of the churches and ecumenical movement in Asia. He praised Dr Cariño for his sharp analysis and articulation of the Asian situation and the ecumenical agenda, which challenged the Asian churches.

At the same meeting, the General Committee elected Dr Ahn Jae Woong as the new General Secretary of CCA for the coming five years, starting 1 January 2001.

Henriette Hutabarat

New General Secretary

Ahn Jae Woong elected to lead CCA

At its meeting on 1–3 December 2000 the General Committee of the Christian Conference of Asia elected Dr Ahn Jae Woong from Korea as its new General Secretary.

Ahn Jae Woong is a veteran of the ecumenical movement. His involvement began in the Student Christian Movement in Korea, where he served as its general secretary. From there he moved to Hong Kong as regional secretary of the Asia Pacific region of the World Student Christian Federation. Following this Ahn was invited to join the staff of URM of CCA. He then returned to Seoul to serve as director of the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development. In 1999 he returned to Hong Kong to take up the position of Associate General Secretary—Finance of CCA.

While in Seoul Ahn taught at different graduate schools and in the Korean program at the San Francisco Theological Seminary.

Ahn was instrumental in setting up the Asian Migrant Centre in Hong Kong, the CCA-WSCF joint program and the women's program of WSCF-AP.

In the 1970s he paid a high price in the struggle for democratisation under the military dictatorship in Korea.

Dr Ahn's family is well known in the Presbyterian Church in Korea. His grandfather was one of the first group of people to be converted to Christianity by American missionaries. He and his wife Kyung Ae have two sons, Joon Hyun and Moon Hyun.

Ahn graduated from Soongsil University with a BA, obtained a MDiv at the Divinity School at Harvard University and did graduate studies at the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary in Seoul as well as Candler School of Theology at Emory University. He was awarded a honorary doctorate from Mary Holmes College in the USA and is currently writing his PhD thesis on Christianity and

Messianic Mission at the University of Utrecht in The Netherlands.

As he takes up his new position as General Secretary Ahn Jae Woong considers it important to highlight the direction of CCA as a unique ecumenical organisation whose purpose is to serve people under the theme 'Fullness of Life for All'.

He sees CCA as part of a worldwide faith and social movements that should work hand in hand, not just with Christians but also secular social organisations, in order to make a society where peace and justice will prevail. As we now live in a multireligious, multicultural and multiethnic society, we must learn how to live together for the fulfilment of people's aspirations in Asia.

He feels it is now time to articulate some theological perspectives that embrace fullness of life. This will require a new theological interpretation of life that includes the whole of life—the whole environment, not just humans—this being true ecumenism.

Ahn Jae Woong's vision for the future of the ecumenical movement includes building up the future leadership amongst youth, women, people at the grassroots and young church leaders. At the same time He feels CCA should respond to challenging issues such as globalisation, information technology, gender fairness, racial justice, human rights and social exclusion as part of its priorities.

Geoff Alves



Ahn Jae Woong

Development and Liberation

Churches urged to lead the anti-globalisation crusade

Christian churches worldwide should spearhead, not merely support, the struggle against market globalisation, especially now that events have shown that the church is influential in shaping a just 'international financial order', according to a statement released during a conference CCA held recently.

'The church as an international organisation has a global voice that world power blocs hear,' the statement said. It is believed that the church-initiated Jubilee 2000 campaign, which advocates the cancellation of foreign debt, has effectively pressured the International Monetary Fund to nullify loans of nations classified as Heavily Indebted Poorer Countries.

The statement underscored that churches and all concerned groups should continue the loan cancellation campaign. Loans of all debt-ridden countries that are considered odious, onerous or fraudulent, and those used in development projects that destroyed the environment and displaced communities should also be annulled.

Dialogue between the churches of the North and South should continue, zeroing in on advocacy work, lobbying and education, the statement proposed. It also urged the church to change its perennial characteristic of reacting to events, and instead proactively perform its mission of liberating the oppressed.

Churches should hold forums joined by resource persons from dif-



Prof. Sulak Sivaraksa delivers a paper at the conference

ferent ideologies to enlighten people and lessen their apprehension of different economic and political systems, the statement added.

Lack of information develops reluctance among church people to join activities on development and liberation. Three professors of human and economic development from different Asian countries stressed during their

presentations at the forum that sustainable community development is the best option to combat globalisation.

Prof. Sulak Sivaraksa, an author of books on development from a Buddhist perspective, stressed that 'there is no specific blueprint for setting up sustainable development—each community must draw on its unique strengths of resources, culture and diversity in order to be successful'. He said a sustainable economic model relying on local production for domestic consumption should be promoted to effectively deter globalisation at the community level. He cited the case of an abbot-led village in Surin, Thailand, which has maintained integrity through self-reliance and cooperation despite the growing threats of modern capitalism.

Prof. Kim Yong-Bock, Chancellor of the Advanced Institute for the Study of Life in Korea, emphasised that Asian communities should delink with the global economy, and forge new links with other groups using alternative approaches. Instead of patronising imported genetically modified farm products, villages should engage in organic farming in their own backyards.

Malaysian economist, Prof. Jomo Sundaram, said the general world situation is considered very complex. No definite alternative guaranteeing sustainable development has been formulated. Supporting community development initiatives is a good option.

CCA in Action

Conference on Development and Liberation in the Third Millennium
Organised by: CCA's JIADS and FMU program areas

Place: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Date: 16–22 October 2000

Participants: Thirty-four participants of diverse religious and social origins from fourteen Asian countries and Aotearoa–New Zealand

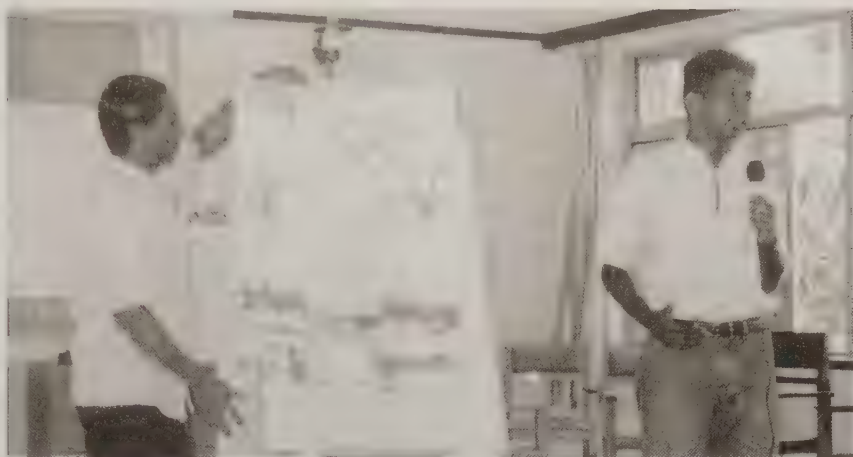
Overcoming Violence

Youth consultation on religious and ethnic plurality

A workshop on Religious and Ethnic Plurality in South and Southeast Asia was organised by CCA in Sri Lanka. The participants were very grateful to NCC Sri Lanka for hosting the workshop, and the hospitality and high level of services they enjoyed at the Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue were very much appreciated. In fact, the Ecumenical Institute itself is a witness to fostering dialogue with other faiths in Sri Lanka.

Religious violence comes from identities that were derived from and intensified during colonial rule in Asia. Rev. Ebenezer Joseph, NCC Sri Lanka General Secretary and resource person for the workshop, highlighting the implication of religious and ethnic plurality in Asia, challenged the participants not to be bound by the such notions such as 'Sinhalese v. Tamils', 'Hindus v. Muslims', or 'Christians v. Muslims', but rather to look into the Asian tradition and culture of people from different faiths living in harmony. Rev. Duleep Fernando, President of the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka, presented Bible studies on peace by reading from the book of Philemon. Rev. Duleep de Chickera, an Anglican priest, challenged participants' framework on ecumenism and encouraged them that when we work for peace, there is peace.

As well as learning from resource persons, input from the participants initiated debate on whether there could be guidelines for overcoming



violence and what was the Christian's position on 'inter-faith marriages'—personal but very political questions. The participants affirmed that their churches should 'stand in the middle' of the conflicts and that spiritual peace is not sufficient for people to live in the fullness of life.

Facilitators, resource persons and participants alike felt strongly the need

for the church to make a more concerted effort in building peace in areas of blatant violence. However, while listening to stories from our participants who have direct or indirect experiences of violence, the participants found that many Christian youth do not have systematic exposure and training on reflecting their faith, and the skills and confidence in working for peace. Christian youth should become more involved in activities and advocacy on human rights and peace issues in Asia.

It is hoped that participants will take home the lessons they learned from the workshop and start to organise activities relevant to their context. There is also the hope that the churches and NCCs take seriously the mission of the church to be followers of Jesus Christ—the Prince of Peace. Finally, there is the hope that there will be support on the difficult journey as a fellowship of churches in Asia.

Shalom!

Cynthia Yuen

CCA in Action

Workshop on Religious and Ethnic Plurality in South and Southeast Asia Workshop

Organised by CCA's Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment program area

Place: Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, Sri Lanka

Date: 25 September – 1 October

Participants: Fourteen youth from six countries

Women and Racism in Asia

Church women from aboriginal, indigenous, tribal, and marginalised groups meet in Taiwan

The Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches recently sponsored a workshop on racism, particularly as it is experienced by women who come from aboriginal, indigenous, tribal, racially or religiously marginalised groups. The fifteen church women from these groups who attended are involved in the struggle for overcoming discrimination and are willing to make follow-up on actions to overcome racism. The workshop was held in Taiwan, which has about thirty indigenous or aboriginal tribes who have lived there for over a thousand years, so was an appropriate place for the meeting and for encounter with aboriginal communities, both in the countryside and around the city.

The workshop aimed at helping the participants:

- gain a better understanding of the racial/ethnic and minority groups situation of women in Asia through country sharing;
- analyse their own experience of racism with a global perspective and in the light of biblical-historical and theological understanding and vision;
- identify strategies for empowerment and action;
- foster closer relationship/solidarity/sister bonding for networking and future follow-up of identified priorities.

Matsui Yayori, in her input on 'The Practice and Impact of Racism on



Participants visit an Atyal aboriginal community in Taiwan

CCA in Action

Women and Racism in Asia

Theme: 'Church Women's Role in Overcoming Racial/Ethnic/ Minority/Religious Discrimination in Asia'

Sponsored by CCA's program area on Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth empowerment and the WCC

Place: Hsinchu Bible College, Hsinchu City, Taiwan, hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

Date: 12-19 September 2000

Women in Asia: An Analysis', stated that 'minority women face not only racism but also sexism because minority men who are discriminated, oppressed and humiliated tend to turn their frustration and resentment to minority women. Minority women are also vulnerable to other forms of violence due to poverty and lack of education, such as trafficking, sexual slavery and forced marriage. They are targeted in forced sterilisation and abortion, which leads to ethnocide.' This multiple discrimination against minority women, manifested economically, politically, socially and culturally, is heightened by the globalisation of the market economy and the current development model.

Corazon Tabing-Reyes

Asian Women's Declaration against Racism

- We are women from churches and indigenous ethnic minority communities in Australia, Aotearoa–New Zealand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.
- We have come together in the spirit of solidarity and friendship to worship, study the Bible, and share our experiences, reflections and analysis of discrimination because of our race, ethnic background, gender or economic status, and to explore ways to combat racism and discrimination.
- The worship and Bible studies on the theme enlightened and inspired us. We worked in a fully participatory and empowering way, enabling us to express ourselves creatively. We had the opportunity to be with aboriginal women in Taiwan and to worship in their churches.
- We have listened with pain and outrage to stories of suffering, despair and struggle of aboriginal women such as the Ainu, Maori, Naga, Moro, Tayal, Haka, Saisiat and indigenous Australians, and migrant workers and other church women from marginalised communities. We also remembered women who were not able to come, and their oppression due to caste and the political systems they are in.
- From these stories we realised the similarities of women's oppression—her story is also my story—that our experiences are one and the same: marginalisation of indigenous people, loss of cultural identity, loss of land and natural resources, violation of indigenous women's rights, commodification of culture and resources, violence against women, religious discrimination, and suppression of the right to self-determination.
- We recognised from our common experiences that our sufferings stem from three root causes: patriarchy, colonisation and globalisation. We believe these to be contrary to God's will and must be condemned and eliminated.
- We affirm the rights of all peoples to life, health, education, employment, prosperity and security. We affirm the right of women and indigenous peoples to cultural expression, to participation in decision making, to chart their own destiny, to liberation from the triple burden of race, class and gender, and to participate in the creation of a just, sustainable and peaceful society.
- We commit ourselves to work together to break the barriers of religion, ethnicity, race, gender, class and all forms of discrimination that divide communities. We stand united and speak with one voice against all forms of discrimination and violence against women and minority groups in society, to recover our cultural identities and enrich community life with our unique contributions, to promote human rights, human dignity and human fellowship, and to work for peace and reconciliation.
- We commit ourselves to bring the issue of racism and the concerns of women and indigenous peoples to the attention of the churches and urge them to act in the light of the Gospel.
- We commit ourselves to keep the memory of this gathering alive in our hearts through the work we will do in our own churches and communities, and through our continuing interaction and friendship. All these we offer in prayer to God, source of the breath of life.



New Ways of Doing URM

Challenge of a younger generation of URM in a different context and facing different challenges

At a recent Strategic and Review Meeting of CCA FMU on Urban Rural Mission more URM doers from the younger generation attended than in the past. The meeting was meant as a means for URM doers in Asia in local, national, subregional and regional levels to review and reflect on what they have been doing so far, and then to come up with as much as possible some 'new ways' of doing URM.

In his introduction, Rev. Josef P. Widyatmadja, Executive Secretary of CCA's Faith, Mission and Unity program area, reminded participants that URM is now in a different context. The financial shortage has forced many organisations, including URM, to reduce and re-adjust their budgets. In so doing, the slogan 'think globally and act locally' is not relevant any more. Instead now it should be 'think locally and act globally'. He also said that another challenge faced by URM today is the importance of building up the leadership to respond to the lack of younger and, particularly, women leaders.

Given that, Rev. Widyatmadja proposed what he calls 'a new way of doing URM', which includes three important points:

- establishing good partnerships with churches and local donors;
- increasing the quality of program implementation and management;
- catching up with a new and critical vision of global power, economic

justice and globalisation.

In addition, URM should focus on leadership capacity building with women in its priority and strengthening the national and subregional programs on economic justice, the impact of globalisation and the complex issue of religious and ethnic conflicts, including the struggle of indigenous people and nations for self-determination.

Three Biblical reflections were delivered—by Ms Anna Marsiana (from Indonesia), by Rev. Dr Lee Sang Youn (from Korea), and Rev. Josef Widyatmadja. These affirmed that URM is not only a movement but also a mission among the people of God. Therefore, URM could not and should not leave the church in serving people. URM should be the extended hands of God in helping people

The meeting was also enriched by reports on several events attended by

URM partners—on an Okinawa meeting by Dr Lee Sang Youn, and on the Kairos meeting on Globalisation and Church Financial System held in Germany, by Rajan Singh—as well as national reports. Many of these national reports spoke of restructuring and reorganising their URM bodies. Rajan Singh, of NCCI (India)—URM, for example, reported that URM in India is now fully integrated into the NCCI structure. Similarly URM Indonesia is now working in partnership with the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI). This was seen as a sign that being URM in Asia is 'listening to the needs of the people' and therefore always readjusting itself to those needs.

The participants agreed that CCA in the coming three-year period should focus on helping the three subregions to overcome their problems, while at the same time still keep its role in facilitating programs at the regional level so URM bodies in Asia have a linkage among themselves and can share experiences across the subregions.

Activity plans were presented by each subregion. While each is concerned with its own problems, such as communal-political conflicts in the Southeast Asia, issues of indigenous people issues in South Asia, and the issue of migrant workers in the Northeast Asia, all three are also concerned in building up the leadership capacity among leaders from the younger generation in general and women in particular.

El. Anna Marsiana

CCA in Action

URM Strategic and Review Meeting
Place: YMCA Collins International
Hostel, Bangkok
Date: 5–8 October 2000

Participants: Eighteen URM activists from eleven countries from three subregions: South Asia (India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan), Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Philippines) and Northeast Asia (Hong Kong, South Korea)

Seeing the Bible through New Eyes

Ecumenical Enablers Workshop



Seeing the Bible through New Eyes was the challenge put to the participants at a recent Ecumenical Enablers Workshop organised by CCA.

Seeing the Bible through new eyes means seeing the Bible through many eyes. It was invigorating to engage in theological discussion and biblical reflection with people from other cultures and denominations. It was important for me, as a New Zealander, to be out of the 'comfort zone' of my cultural and church environment. Interacting with participants from many Asian countries and Australia brought into sharp focus the issues of poverty and marginalisation, and the experiences and perspectives of women and tribal/indigenous people.

Seeing the Bible through new eyes

means challenging some traditional ways of using the Bible. For example:

- reading only selective verses and avoiding those which make radical demands upon the reader;
- reading the Bible solely for devotional use, spiritualising its message and ignoring its focus on justice

and social transformation;

- reading the Bible in isolation from its social context, which leads to an uncritical acceptance of past values, which become imposed on the present.

Seeing the Bible through new eyes affirms that the God of the Bible is the God of the oppressed. When reading the Bible we should be continually asking ourselves what is its message for the oppressed and the oppressor. Jesus brought the oppressed onto centre stage. For Jesus, the Kingdom of God is unlike all other kingdoms, it is non-oppressive.

Seeing the Bible through new eyes is to see new ways of being church in Asia. Brother Edmund Chia from Malaysia noted that while the church had been in existence in Asia for over many

CCA in Action

Ecumenical Enablers Workshop
Organised by CCA Faith, Unity and
Mission

Place: YMCA, Bangkok

Date: 4–9 September 2000

Participants: Forty-seven
representatives from twelve Asian
countries plus Australia and
Aotearoa–New Zealand

years, Christianity continues to be perceived as a foreign religion. Using some images first suggested by Dr Stanley Samartha, he spoke of two ways of being church in Asia.

First, the helicopter church. Features of this form of church in Asia are the use of triumphalistic language and the patronising attitude of coming to save the peoples of Asia. Proselytism and conversion by the churches causes resentment in Asia because church expansion is perceived as Western expansion. Most foreign evangelists take the Great Commission as their mandate to convert. Brother Edmund Chia reflected, 'Have such evangelists ever known of the existence of the first commission—of love for one's neighbours? How can one claim to be loving one's neighbour if one does not even have respect for the religion and God of one's neighbour?'

Secondly, the bullock-cart church. Features of this form of church in Asia are:

- dialogue with the poor. Like the bullock-cart that trudges along the dusty roads of Asia, the church also

needs to walk the dusty earth in order to discover God in the soils of Asia;

- dialogue with religions. Brother Edmund quoted Bishop Julio Labayen of the Philippines who wrote, 'We are not saviours of Asia. We are but "guests" in the house of the religions of Asia.' Edmund reflected, 'We already know what God has done through our religion, but how much do we know about what God has done for others in and through their religions?'

The bullock-cart church operates from a 'Jesus serves' mind-set. It understands mission not so much in terms of numerical growth or church expansion, but more in terms of participation in the creative mission of God, in the healing of brokenness and in the bridging of the rifts between humanity and the cosmos.

Seeing the Bible through new eyes was helped by the calibre of the input into the workshop. Bible studies were led by Dr Daniel Thiagarajah from CCA Faith, Mission and Unity on 'Jesus and the Rich Ruler'; Mrs Joan Deva-

sahayam, Church of South India, on 'Jesus and the Samaritan Woman'; Dr Chung Sook Ja on 'Conflict in the Leadership Teams of Moses, Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12)'; and Bishop V. Devasahayam, Madras Diocese, Church of South India, on 'The Labourers in the Vineyard—a Dalit Reading of the Parable.' The four keynote addresses were given by: Bishop V. Devasahayam, on 'Reading the Bible through New Eyes'; Brother Edmund Chia, on 'Towards an Asian Church'; Dr Chung Sook Ja, on 'Is God's Language Clear to You?', a feminist perspective on reading the Bible; and Ms Awala Longkumer, National Council of Churches India, a member of the Ao tribe in Nagaland, on 'Reading the Bible with New Eyes from the Tribal Perspective'.

When the Bible is seen through the eyes of women, the poor, the marginalised and tribal/indigenous people, it is seen for what it really is. It is the story of God giving hope to people who have lost hope, and empowering powerless people.

Barry Jones

Together with Indigenous People

Consultation on emerging Asian theologies in dialogue

A Consultation on Emerging Asian Theologies in Dialogue, with the theme, 'Twenty-first Century—Together with the Indigenous Peoples in Asia' dealt with the challenges faced by the indigenous peoples of Asia. The consultation, as the rationale put it, noted that, while

the twentieth century on the one hand has been an era of development in the fields of science and technology, making human contacts easy, on the other hand there has been the negative effects of globalisation, affecting all humankind. While the world market has become a powerful force, the Third

World has been pushed to the periphery, dependent on powerful developed countries setting the agenda for poorer nations. Human relations have been distorted by the policies of consumerist ideologies.

The struggle for ethnic identity and the yearnings of indigenous peoples

pushed to the edge have been major issues in the past century. They continue to threaten the new millennium. The experiences of Third World people, their cultures, their religions and their struggles for justice and liberation raise serious questions regarding the Eurocentric model of theologising. The struggles and sufferings of these people for a new life demand a new paradigm of theologising, a paradigm that should emerge out of the experiences of people who live under structures of violence, caste and racial discrimination, patriarchy and economic exploitation. Since all these theologies emerge from the experience of oppression, discrimination and marginalisation, all of them stoutly reject the idea that their experience of oppression is God ordained or sanctioned.

Instead, they see God being involved in their struggles. The consultation grappled with these issues to articulate faith in God, which is in reality the real 'God-talk'.

CCA in Action

Consultation on Emerging Asian Theologies in Dialogue

Organised by CCA Faith, Mission and Unity and the Korean Society for Service in Asia

Theme: 'Twenty-first Century—Together with the Indigenous Peoples in Asia'

Place: Academy House, Soo Won, Korea

Date: 24–29 October 2000

Participants: Twenty-five

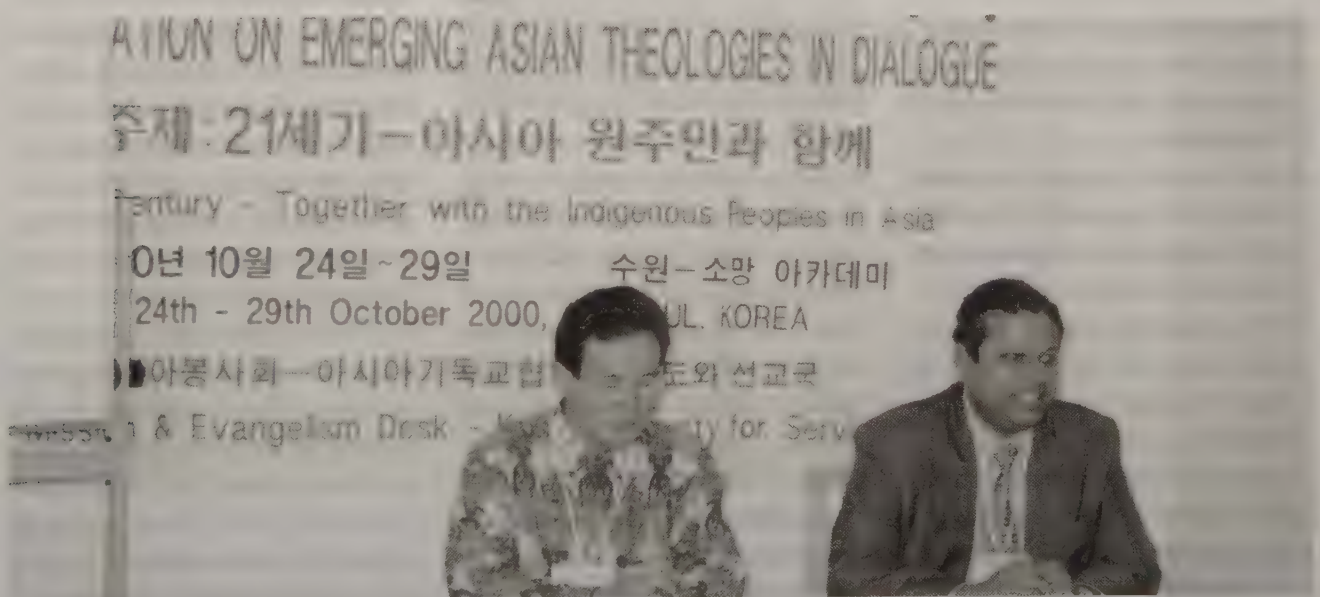
The keynote speaker at the consultation was Fr Maria Aralia Rajah, a Jesuit priest from Madras, India, who is completing his doctoral dissertation on 'Dalit Studies' under Fr Felix Wilfred. He spoke on 'Contextual Theologies—Some Salient Features'. Rev. Joe Hut from Aotearoa—New Zealand approached the theme from a Maori perspective, while Rev. Austin Charles, who is the convener of Dalit and Aid

Vasse Concerns of the Church of South India, presented a paper on 'The Dalit Context'. Rev. Dr Kim Young-Dong, a Korean Missionary in Indonesia and a Professor of Missions in the Great Commission Theological Seminary, Jakarta, spoke on 'Mission Theology of/with the Indigenous Peoples of Asia'. 'The Burakin Struggles for Identity' was presented by Prof. Hatakeyama Yasuo of Seiwa College, Japan. Ms Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes, the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines led the participants in two biblical reflections and also shared with the group the present-day scenario of the Philippines. Daily devotions were conducted by Dr Daniel Thiagarajah and Fr Maria Arulrajah.

Participants also had the privilege of attending worship at Dorim Presbyterian Church, where Ms Sharon Rose was the preacher.

The proceedings of the consultations will be published soon.

Daniel Thiagarajah



Prof. Kim Young-Dong and Dr Daniel Thiagarajah at the consultation, 'Twenty-first Century—Together with the Indigenous Peoples in Asia'

Women's Voices and Visions

Asian women theologians' discuss women's contribution to the renewal and unity of the church

Twenty Asian women theologians, together with the Steering Committee of the WCC Women's Program Project 'on being church: women's voices and visions', gathered in a consultation on 24–29 October 2000 in Seoul, Korea. The activity was sponsored by WCC JPC–Women in partnership with CCA. Rev. Kim Dong Wan, NCCK General Secretary, welcomed the participants during the opening worship led by Korean women theologians.

The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, a WCC project that Asian churches participated in, ended in 1998. But women (and men) need to engage in a continuing process of exploration and reflection on the following questions among ourselves and with our churches for action:

- What does it mean to be called by God to live in and for the world?
- What forms of spirituality would nurture the life of the church as community?
- How might the ministry of the whole church be renewed to include the gifts that God gives to women (and men) for service?
- What structures would better equip the church for faithfulness in its task of witness and service in the world?

The aim of the gathering was to gather women's voices and visions and bring them to the churches as women's contribution to the renewal and greater unity of the church. The steer-

How might the ministry of the whole church be renewed to include the gifts that God gives to women (and men) for service?

ing committee's presence in this consultation gave a global taste to the gathering. Present were Dr Elizabeth Amoah of Ghana, Cristina Breaban of Romania, Nancy Cardoso-Pereira of Brazil, Shannon Clarkson of the USA, Janet Crawford of Aotearoa–New Zealand, Letty Russel of the USA and Chung Sook Ja of Korea.

In 'Metaphors and Models of the Church in Korea: From a Korean Feminist Perspective', Han Kuk Yom, Chung Sook Ja, Kim Soon Young and Choi Man Ja discussed models of church within the traditional structure such as Minjung Church, Women Church, Church for Equal Ministry and Participatory Church. Lee Moon Sook shared about the church in the ecumenical movement while Han Kuk Yom and Chung Sook Ja shared about the church in the community movement.

On 'Community, Diversity and Justice', Septemmy Lakawa engaged the group to reflect on the church overcoming violence in the context of Indonesia, while Rose Wu led in re-

flecting on the church as a 'community of solidarity' in the context of Hong Kong's Tongzhi culture and movement.

On 'Word, Sacrament and Liturgy', Nila Bermisa presented the traditional understanding of this theme according to the Catholic Church in the Philippines, cultural and historical experiences of colonisation and patriarchy and the current liberating expressions of rituals and liturgies. Resley Abraham shared her Dalit woman's response to the theme, focusing on the search into the Dalit roots 'to find the values of respect for creation and for a life of equality'.

Panel presentations on 'Being Church' visions were done by Jenny TePaa, a Maori, Thaya Thiagarah, a Tamil, and Yong Ting Jin from the community of In God's Image—Asian Women's Resource Centre.

Each participant had a story to tell that was joined in the loop of action–reflection. The women also had the opportunity of bonding through worship, sharing of stories, accounts of military sexual slavery reflections, creativity and affirming each other's respective work back home.

A WCC publication of the papers will follow. It will then be important to have a follow-up process in Asia through the initiative of the participants among young and older women (and men) in the church and in the community, in theological education and in church-related institutions.

Cora Tabing-Reyes

Refugees and their Rights

Consultation held in Thailand

Twenty-one communicators, representing NGOs, the media, and ecumenical organisations in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Myanmar and the Philippines took part in a consultation 'Refugees in Southeast Asia and their Rights to Information and Communication' that was held at the Bangkok YMCA between 12–15 November. The consultation was formally

opened by Dr Henriette Hutabarat, Associate General Secretary, Christian Conference of Asia, Ms Woronut Pantupong, Assistant General Secretary, Ecumenical Relations, Council of Churches of Thailand and Mehm Tun Than, chairperson of the Asia Region WACC. The consultation focused essentially on the information and communication (including language) rights of

refugees. It dealt with three aspects:

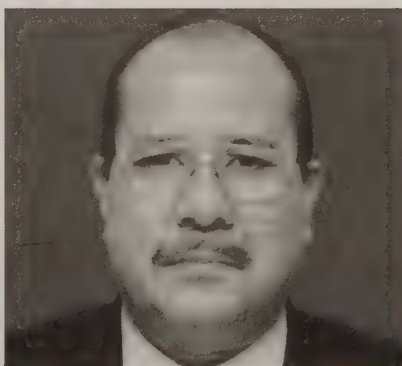
- the representation of refugees in the mainstream media in Southeast Asia;
- the use of the media by refugee organisations for advocacy, networking and information sharing;
- practical communications/information support for refugee groups in the region.

New CCA Staff Member

Tony Waworuntu, 48, from the Protestant Church in Western Indonesia was appointed by the General Committee at its recent meeting as Joint Executive Secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service with effect from 1 November 2000.

Tony graduated from the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Indonesia in Jakarta with a Bachelor of Business Administration, and holds a Master's degree in Management Science from the University of Trisakti in Jakarta. Before joining the CCA staff he occupied the position of Dean of the School of Economics in Jakarta and was a lecturer in Marketing Management and Strategic Management at the Graduate School of Management in Jakarta.

Tony is well known as a lay leader of the churches in Indonesia. He was actively involved in the leadership of



the Student Christian Movement in Indonesia, as General Secretary (1976–1978) and Chairperson of the Indonesian SCM (1978–1980). He was Vice Chairman, Indonesia Ecumenical Institute of the National Council of Churches in Indonesia (1975–1978), General Chairman of the Joint Committee of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia and the Student Christian Movement of Indonesia (1995–2000), Chairman of the Synod of the Protestant Church in Western Indonesia (1995–2000) and Chairman of the

Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) (2000–2005). At the General Assembly of CCA in Tomohon he was elected to the General Committee. He was an Indonesian fraternal worker to the Church of Baden, Konstanz, West Germany 1980–1981 and was a member of the CCA Program Committee on International Affairs (1995–2000). He is a member of the Commission of the Churches on International Relations of the World Council of Churches (1999–2006). He has been involved in various ecumenical meetings and discussions in Indonesia as well as in Asia and other parts of the world.

Tony has also been active in the political life of Indonesia. He was a member of Parliament and the Peoples Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia in 1997–1999.

Tony and his wife Johanna Diana Tompodung have two children, Asa Yehuda, 19, and Gatra Waraney, 15.

Orthodox Participation in WCC

Special commission meets in Cairo

At the conclusion of its second meeting, in Cairo, Egypt, in October, the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches (WCC) released the following communiqué:

The Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches (WCC) held its second meeting, 23–25 October 2000, at St Mark Centre in Cairo, Egypt, at the gracious invitation of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

The Commission is composed of an equal number of representatives appointed by the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches and representatives from the other member churches of the WCC appointed by the Central Committee.

Its co-moderators were Bishop Rolf Koppe (Evangelical Church in Germany) and Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople) in the absence of Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Ephesus.

The mandate of the Special Commission is 'to study and analyse the whole spectrum of issues related to Or-

thodox participation in the WCC' and 'to make proposals concerning the necessary changes in structure, style and ethos of the Council' to the WCC Central Committee.

At its first meeting in Morges, Switzerland, 6–8 December 1999, the Commission identified four issues of special concern and named subcommittees to explore each of these:

- I. the organisation of the WCC;
- II. the style and the ethos of our life together in the WCC;
- III. theological convergences and differences between Orthodox and other traditions in the WCC;
- IV. existing models and new proposals for a structural framework for the WCC that would make possible meaningful participation by Orthodox churches.

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, welcomed the Commission in the presence of leaders of other churches in Cairo. In a clear exposition, His Holiness indicated some of the difficulties that the Orthodox experience in the life of the WCC.

His Holiness said that, in seeking visible unity, the member churches should work in ways that unite, rather than divide them.

Bishop Rolf Koppe thanked His Holiness for the hospitality of the Coptic Orthodox Church and for finding time personally to share in the work of the Commission.

Members of the Commission were able to attend liturgical worship in the churches of various traditions in Cairo. At the conclusion of the meeting some Commission members visited His Beatitude Patriarch Petros VII of Alexandria and All Africa at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Alexandria.

The Commission heard updates on significant developments within the Orthodox world, including the churches in Russia, Serbia and the Middle East. Also present at the meeting were observers from the Georgian Orthodox Church.

The Commission by consensus received extensive reports and recommendations from each of the subcommittees, noting remarkable convergence in the four reports

The special commission was created by the WCC's 8th assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998. Behind the decision to create the Commission were increasingly vocal expressions of concerns about the WCC among Orthodox churches. These had culminated in a meeting of Eastern Orthodox churches in Thessaloniki, Greece, in May 1998. Central Orthodox concerns as summarised by that meeting included some activities of the WCC itself, 'certain developments within some Protestant member

churches of the Council that are reflected in the debates of the WCC', lack of progress in ecumenical theological discussions and the perception that the present structure of the WCC makes meaningful Orthodox participation increasingly difficult and even for some impossible. In its action approving creation of the Special commission, the Harare assembly noted that 'other churches and ecclesial families' have concerns similar to those expressed by the Orthodox.

This convergence enabled the commission to focus on five clusters of concerns:

- issues related to membership;
- a review of decision-making processes;
- worship/common prayer;
- developing ecumenical methodologies for approaching social and ethical issues;

- ecclesiological issues.

Underlying these discussions was the vital question of what kind of council does the ecumenical movement need to work towards in the future.

The Commission produced a progress report, to be forwarded to the WCC Central Committee, which will meet in Potsdam, near Berlin, Germany, 29 January – 6 February 2001.

It also approved a plan of action, which involves concentrated work before the next plenary meeting in November 2001 in Hungary, at the invitation of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

A final report is expected for the Central Committee meeting to be held in September 2002.

WCC

Human Rights Violations in Palestine

WCC delegation calls for action and prayer

A necessary and positive step to put an end to Israeli violation and oppression of Palestinians under occupation,' was the response of Marwan Bishara to the resolution adopted by the Fifth Special Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) held on 17–19 October. Bishara was a member of a World Council of Churches delegation present at the special session. The resolution called for the establishment of a 'human rights inquiry commission' to compile information on violations of human rights and acts in the occupied Palestinian territories. The World Council of Churches previously had called for an objective investigation of Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people.

Bishara, however, also expressed disappointment that the European Union had opposed the resolution, 'contradicting the very human rights principles cherished by the Union'. He

'This is a holy land, a land of faith and prayer. It is written nowhere that it should remain a land of hatred and blood. On the contrary, in the mercy of God, this land is determined to be a land of redemption and love. This is why we have come to pray: not for more hatred and more troubles, but for more justice and more love, in the munificence of God Almighty. Amen.'

—His Beatitude, Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, on behalf of Patriarch Diodoros I, Patriarch Torkom II, and all the heads of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem, at an Ecumenical Prayer Service held on 12 October 2000 in Jerusalem

noted that the resolution did not cover human rights violations inside Israel, and hoped that 'UN member states as well as concerned non-governmental organisations and churches work to-

ward the end of racism and the beginning of an inquiry into the Israeli oppression of its own Palestinian minority'.

The WCC, in its written and oral submissions to the special session, reiterated its call to strengthen current human rights mechanisms and implement existing UN resolutions to bring justice and peace between Palestinian and Israeli people. This was echoed by the Rt Rev. Riah Abu El-Assal, Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, who said, 'It is not enough to condemn. We have received a pile of statements condemning the violence. But there has been no action to force Israel to comply with the United Nations resolutions.'

Archimandrite Theodosios Hanna has called on churches around the world to have special prayers for the Palestinian people living under occupation, Christian and Muslim, and for 'a real and whole peace in the Middle East.'

WCC

Climate Change

WCC challenges rich countries at conference in The Hague

The debate about climate change and the need to reduce emission levels of carbon dioxide is fundamentally an ethical issue: this was the position of the World Council of Churches at the Sixth Conference of Parties (COP6) on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in The Hague, Netherlands. The WCC was represented at the conference by an ecumenical delegation of twelve people.

'Over the years since the adoption of the Climate Change Convention at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, attention has shifted away from a priority on emissions reduction actions in the richer polluting countries to strategies for those same countries to purchase low-cost reduction credits in other

countries. Wealthy polluting countries should not be allowed to buy their way out of the problem through paying for projects in other countries,' says the WCC statement.

The coordinator of the WCC's Climate Change Program, Dr David Hallman, says, 'The shift from the actual reduction of carbon dioxide emissions of the rich polluting countries to emissions trading is unethical as a primary means of meeting reduction targets.' On 18 November, the WCC delegation shared its views during an ecumenical workshop at the Zorgvlietkerk, Prins Mauritslaan 10, The Hague. The workshop was sponsored by Samen op Weg-kerken ('Churches Together on the Way'), together with local churches and church networks.

The WCC also sponsored an ecumenical church service at the Kloosterkerk in The Hague on Sunday, 19 November.

The WCC delegation was drawn from member churches in Argentina, India, Kenya, Russia, Mexico, Zimbabwe, China, Canada, the United Kingdom, the USA and the Netherlands. These churches have been following the Framework Convention on Climate Change since the Rio Summit.

In The Hague, the delegation called for climate change negotiations to be refocused on options that meet the criteria of environmental effectiveness, equity, responsibility and economic efficiency, with the priority being emissions reductions strategies in the high per capita polluting countries. WCC

Fiftieth Anniversary of UNHCR

Churches urged to address the needs of uprooted people

On 14 December 2000, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) commemorated its fiftieth anniversary. UNHCR was created as a temporary instrument to respond to the needs of Europeans displaced as a result of World War 2. Since then its mandate has not only been renewed every few years, but the scope of its work has expanded enormously. To-

day it is the primary instrument of the United Nations working with more than 22 million refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and internally displaced people in 152 countries in all regions of the world.

The churches too have a long history of responding to the needs of uprooted people. Even before the formation of the World Council of Churches, churches were working to-

gether to meet the needs of those forced by war and economic circumstances to flee their homes. Working closely with UNHCR since it was created, the churches have provided assistance to uprooted people, facilitating their local integration, repatriation and resettlement, and have advocated for their protection and for the respect of their human rights. In 1995, the World Council of Churches Central

Committee issued a statement urging churches to address the needs of uprooted people in their own communities. In 1997 it adopted a major policy statement and called on churches to join in an "Ecumenical Year of Churches in Solidarity with Uprooted People".

Since then, the situation has deteriorated. Governments have devised more sophisticated ways of preventing would-be asylum-seekers and migrants from reaching their borders.

Xenophobia, racism and hatred of the stranger are increasing in all regions of the world, with increasing displays of hostility and even violence toward foreigners. The international community has yet to respond adequately to meet the needs of those who are displaced by violence but remain within their country's borders. Some governments have gone so far as to suggest that the 1951 Refugee Convention is outdated and needs to be revised to make it even more restrictive. UNHCR

is increasingly subject to contradictory pressures from its member governments and civil society—host governments call for adequate assistance to refugees on their territory, donor governments seek to reduce expenditures and urge repatriation as soon as possible, human rights groups press for more vigorous defence of the rights of uprooted people and others, especially churches, call for the UNHCR to exercise more energetically the moral authority of its office. *WCC*

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, 26-29 September 2000:

- extends its congratulations to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and her staff for the dedicated work they have done for refugees, migrants and internally displaced people over the past fifty years;
- urges UNHCR to remain a beacon of hope and an uncompromising defender of the rights of those who are forcibly displaced from their communities because of violence, persecution, human rights abuses and war;
- assures UNHCR of the continuing support of the churches as it works to uphold and to strengthen its mandate to protect asylum-seekers and refugees;
- calls on governments to make available the necessary resources to enable UNHCR to fulfil its mandate and to provide leadership to the international community in this field;
- reaffirms its support for the principles of the 1951 Convention on Refugees and its 1967 protocol as the foundation stone of international refugee law;
- urges governments to adhere to the spirit and the letter of these laws in extending protection to those who are in need of it;
- calls upon the churches to use the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the UNHCR to raise awareness about the plight of uprooted people in their communities and to seek ways to ensure that their rights and dignity are respected, and their basic needs are met.

Global Ecumenical Network on Uprooted People

Churches urged to become more effective advocates for those forced to leave their homes

The Global Ecumenical Network on Uprooted People, at its meeting on 24–26 September 2000 held at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland, underlined the importance of mobilising churches to become more effective advocates for uprooted people and the trafficking of people. In this meeting, CCA was represented by Mr Victor Azariah, General Secretary of the National Coun-

cil of Churches in Pakistan, who is also a member of the CCA Executive Committee, and Dr Henriette Hutabarat, CCA Associate General Secretary.

Network members stressed that the numbers of uprooted people are increasing, that governmental policies towards them are becoming harsher and that racism and xenophobia are growing. Participants also highlighted that traffick-

ing of people is becoming a huge issue in all regions, with implications for everything from the growth of organised crime to the implementation of human rights standards, and that 'trafficking increases as legal avenues for migration diminish'. The network intends to concentrate on increasing awareness and networking on this issue.

The network also:

- endorsed a campaign by non-governmental organisations to urge the UN General Assembly to declare 18 December as International Migrants Day. December 18 is the tenth anniversary of the passage of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Mi-

grant Workers and Members of Their Families;

- expressed concern about UNHCR funding shortfalls, budget cuts, and reduction of regional offices and staff, which often effects the most vulnerable, such as refugee children, and places a heavier burden on NGOs, including churches;
- encouraged the WCC's work on racism and xenophobia, specifically in relation to the preparation for the UN World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;
- called for further reflection on the relationship between globalisation and migration;
- called for intensified support for

peace and conflict-resolution as fundamental to addressing the causes that uproot people.

Members of the Global Ecumenical Network also participated in UNHCR consultations with non-government organisations held in Geneva. Issues of protection and the role of the military in humanitarian assistance were addressed in presentations by WCC staff. Within the CCA, the concerns on uprooted people are addressed specifically through the program on Migrant Workers, Refugees and Uprooted People in Asia (MRIA), which, in the new structure of CCA is placed under the program area on Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service.

Henriette Hutabarat

REOs Meet in Hong Kong

CCA hosts meeting of regional ecumenical organisations and the World Council of Churches

CCA hosted a meeting of representatives of regional ecumenical organisations from around the world and the World Council of Churches on 27–29 November 2000 at the YMCA International House in Hong Kong. Officers and general secretaries of the WCC, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the Conference of European Churches (CEC), the Middle East Conference of Churches (MECC) and the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) attended the meeting. Meetings of REOs have been held at intervals over the past several years hosted by various REOs in rotation. It has taken on added significance now, however, at a time

when the whole ecumenical movement is undergoing discussion of a 'common understanding and vision', opening up more serious discussion of a wider and more inclusive ecumenical fellowship in a global world.

After listening to the concerns from each region, participants discussed their common ecumenical agenda and issues related to REOs and WCC relationships and cooperation. The meeting discussed in-depth topics such as 'wider ecumenism: pluralism and globalisation' and received further information regarding two major ecumenical initiatives, the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.

Reviewing the function and purpose of the meeting, participants agreed that it had been helpful in providing a platform for the leadership of REOs and the WCC to exchange information and concerns and to strengthen the cooperation between them. Some concrete forms of interregional cooperation have been undertaken, especially in addressing shared concerns faced by the regions. The importance of the aspects of spirituality and fellowship among participants was also underlined. CCA was pleased to provide both context and leadership to this gathering and to help in energising whatever possibilities it might carry for the future.

F. Cariño/H. Hutabarat

Third Seminar of the Asian Movement for Christian Unity

Chiang Mai, Thailand, 27 January – 1 February 2001

The cooperation and joint work between the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) have grown considerably in the past few years. Following mandates given by the assemblies of both bodies, the Asia Ecumenical Committee (AEC) has been formed as the joint committee for discussion and cooperation between the two bodies.

The Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU) is the AEC arm through which various activities have taken place. AMCU consultations have been held twice over the past four years. A joint ecumenical formation program was held in 1999 in Bangalore, India, and mutual participation in each other's activities has intensified. Catholic theologians and theological students have participated in the meetings of the Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS) and in the recently concluded Asia Conference of Theological Students (ACTS).

A joint CCA and FABC staff meeting has already been held and another is planned.

Of great importance, however, is that as the practice of 'manifesting the unity that already exists among us' has grown, a recent Papal Exhortation, 'Ecclesia in Asia', urges the study of various forms of ecumenical association in Asia and elsewhere, and the exploration of various forms and models of ecumenical association and

structures that might be appropriate to promote Christian unity in Asia (para. 30). The CCA, for its part, has passed various resolutions at its assemblies indicating its willingness and desire to look into the possibility of a wider ecumenical structure that would involve the constituencies of both bodies and provide space for a more inclusive ecumenical fellowship in Asia.

The third AMCU consultation is built on these developments and seeks to catch a critical moment in ecumenical time to raise the issue of 'giving shape to a new ecumenical vision'. No commitments precede the consultation.

It is hoped however that in having reached the point where we can begin to discuss the issues involved in the theme, we might be able to open new possibilities for the future.

In addition, the consultation will discuss some current ecumenical documents: a Catholic and Anglican joint document on 'Anglican and the Primacy: the Gift of Authority' and a Catholic and Lutheran joint document on 'The Lutheran-Catholic Agreement on Justification'.

The consultation, which was strongly mandated by the CCA General Assembly in Tomohon, will be attended by over forty participants from both CCA and the FABC.

For details contact Henriette Hutabarat, Associate General Secretary for Relationships and Communication.

Joint Meeting of the CCA Program Area Committees

Bangkok, Thailand, 20–24 February 2001

This is the first meeting of the CCA Program Area Committees elected at the CCA General Assembly in Tomohon. It will be a joint meeting—the hope is that at the beginning of the work of the committees they will work together to develop a common understanding of the mandate of the recent General Assembly in Tomohon, Indonesia, and a shared framework in planning CCA programs in the next five years in a more integrated way. There will be joint sessions and individual sessions for the program area committees to plan and to set the mechanism for program implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The new program area committees, according to the structure adopted by the General Assembly in Tomohon are:

- Faith, Mission and Unity;
- Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service;
- Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment.

In addition, the Executive Committee functions as the program committee for the General Secretariat, which carries the task of implementing programs on relationships and communication.

Thus the first joint meeting of the program area committees will be attended by about sixty members of the committees and CCA staff.

For details contact Henriette Hutabarat, Associate General Secretary for Relationships and Communication.

Strategic Planning Meeting of NCC Women's Desk Secretaries or Committee Moderators

Manila, Philippines, 2-9 March 2001

This program will be hosted by the NCC Philippines. All women's desk secretaries or committee moderators of member councils are invited to attend to identify common goals, roles and procedure and for interpersonal relations.

For details contact Corazon Tabing-Reyes, Executive Secretary for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment.

Asia Sunday 2001

27 May 2001

Theme: 'Nurturing Culture of Peace: Overcoming Violence'

It has been a tradition for Asian churches to celebrate Asia Sunday every year on the Sunday before Pentecost to commemorate the founding of the East Asian Christian Conference (EACC, now CCA) on 14 May 1959, and to remember and celebrate the commitment of Asian churches' life together. Thus the date for Asia Sunday 2001 is Sunday, 27 May 2001. In the midst of escalating conflicts and violence in Asia and around the world today, the theme chosen for Asia Sunday 2001 is most appropriate. With

this celebration it is hoped that the Asian churches will be inspired to continue to reflect on the theme and to find ways to incorporate this concern in their calendar of activities. This is a way for Asian churches to join the whole ecumenical family in promoting and nurturing the culture of peace, which is very much in the heart of the ecumenical agenda known as the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV). Asia has played a leading role in the launching of this program, which was done in Malang, Indonesia, on 18 November 2000, initiated by the Asia Regional Secretary of the WCC in cooperation with CCA and the Communion of Churches in Indonesia. The World Council of Churches will officially launch the program at its Central Committee meeting in Germany in February 2001.

It is hoped that the materials for Asia Sunday 2001 will be ready and be circulated to churches by early January 2001. Churches and local parishes are encouraged to find a suitable time to observe Asia Sunday if the above date is not suitable.

Third Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS III)

Jogyakarta, Indonesia, 6-11 August 2001
Theme: Visioning New Life Together among Asian Religions

For details and renewal of subscriptions contact Daniel S. Thiagarajah, Executive Secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity.

School for Ecumenical Leadership Formation

Thailand, 15 July - 18 August 2001

For details contact Cynthia Yuen, Executive Secretary for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment.

Asia Ecumenical Course 2001

Kerala, India,

15 August - 10 September 2001

This course will be hosted by the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church. It is a major formation course for twenty-five ecumenical leaders.

For details contact Corazon Tabing-Reyes, Executive Secretary for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment.

Asia Educators Forum

Korea, 8-14 October 2001

Key educators in Asia from CCA member councils and churches will gather at this forum to share visions, challenges and strategies of doing education and ecumenical formation in the new millennium. They will also identify how the forum can be a sustained gathering of key Asian educators in the coming years for their contribution in the direction and practice of education in church and society.

For details contact Corazon Tabing-Reyes, Executive Secretary for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment.

~ Fiji ~

Focus on Prayer

The International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC) held its twenty-first annual meeting in Nadi, Fiji, on 7–10 November 2000.

The ICFLC gathered for worship, for study led by Lisa Meo, for business and for bonding. They shared about women's programs from different regional and global ecumenical bodies and how the FLC is promoted. The ICFLC also appropriated funds for forty-one project grants, twelve block grants, and administration to a total of \$373,000. This money will all come from the 'least coins' that church women will give for justice, peace and reconciliation in 2001. Dr Esther Byu, the Executive Secretary, reiterates that FLC funds are appropriated in faith. What Shanti Solomon of India started in Asia has grown to be a global women's movement.

Three-day visitations to women in Suva, Tonga and Samoa followed the business meeting. The visits aimed at strengthening the fellowship of the ICFLC with women at the grassroots and to campaign for participation of

women in the FLC, where the focus is on prayer. 'The FLC is a prayer movement. It is not a fund-raising body nor a donor agency or organisation. Through this movement, Christian women around the world seek fellowship with each other and are reminded to live a reconciling and forgiving life with others. Anyone who wishes to join this movement makes a commitment to spend time in prayer whenever she has a strained relationship with another person, and to uphold in prayer others who are victims of jealousy, hatred, violence and injustice. Each time she prays for justice, peace and reconciliation, she sets aside one 'least coin' of her currency as a tangible token toward her prayer being answered. These coins are sent regularly to her country's FLC collection point, from where it is forwarded to the FLC Fund. The amount collected by each country is never publicised—only the total sum collected each year is announced. It is important that only the 'least coin' of each currency be set aside so that even the poorest women of each country can be a part of this fellowship of love and care.'

Christian women are all invited to join!
Cora Tabing-Reyes

~ Thailand ~

ACISCA in the New Emerging Situation in Asia

'ACISCA's Vision, Mission and Strategies for Church and Society in the New Emerging Situation in Asia' was the theme of the Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia (ACISCA) Directors Meeting in Bangkok on 16–19 October 2000. It was attended by thirty-one participants and guest resource persons.

Chairperson Sudhakar S. Ramteke, in his opening remarks, emphasised the importance of the gathering in terms of cooperative efforts in addressing the need to overcome violence, the need for wholeness and healing amongst communities in conflict, and the need to address the e-gap of information technology that is widening the gap between rich and poor in Asia at the beginning of the new millennium. His call is in line with OIKOSNET's (Global Ecumenical Network of Christian Lay Centres, Academies and Movements for Social Concern, of which ACISCA is a member) focus for the next five years.

During this Meeting, ACISCA celebrated its 30th Founding Anniversary in a simple liturgy, remembering the story of its beginning, the highlights of its life, and its Constitutional Aims and Functions. The ACISCA continues to strengthen links and cooperation among members and networks in working towards 'human development, social justice, liberation from poverty and restoration of basic human rights' (from the ACISCA constitution).

Cora Tabing Reyes



~ India ~

Award to T.K. Thomas



The K.M. Tharakan Foundation has selected ecumenical communicator, Professor T.K. Thomas, for its Acharya (Spiritual Teacher) Award for 2000.

Presenting the award in Bangalore, India, on 3 November, media expert Fr Michael Traber called T.K. Thomas 'a brilliant editor and a fine human being'. A person like T.K. Thomas 'belongs not just to a group of people, but to the whole world', he said.

The Acharaya award comprises a citation and a cash prize of US\$100. The award is given every year to an individual who makes significant contributions in the field of society, culture and education. The award citation said that, Thomas' 'wit and wisdom, compassion and pastoral care have guided the lives of many students and young people at the Madras Christian College and friends and colleagues around the world'.

Thomas, 75, taught English literature at the Union Christian College and the Madras Christian College, in the southern Indian states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu respectively. Later, he served as the editorial secretary of a Christian publishing organisation, the Christian Literature Society in Madras.

Thomas was Communications Secretary of CCA before joining the World Council of Churches as its Publications Secretary, 1981-91.

His 'critical acumen in English literature and Christian theology and his remarkable editorial skills have enhanced the quality of hundreds of publications at the Christian Literature Society, CCA and WCC' the citation noted. Among the published books of Thomas is *A Christian Response to Gandhian Satyagraha*.

The citation also said his 'capacity for creating genuine bonds of friendships and fraternity across cultures and countries has exemplified ecumenism with a human face, and whose life together with his beloved wife Anna and children has set a model for families everywhere in the world'.

Thomas was selected for the award by a three-member judging committee headed by Father K.M. George, who is a theologian and the secretary of WCC's program committee. Among previous Acharya awardees is the late Metropolitan of the Indian Orthodox church, Dr Paulose Mar Gregorios.

The K.M. Tharakan Foundation was set up in 1990 in honour of Professor Kizhakkethalackal Mathen Tharakan, a writer, literary critic and English teacher, who was a chairman of the Kerala Sahitya (Literary) Academy.

Philip Mathew

~ Australia ~

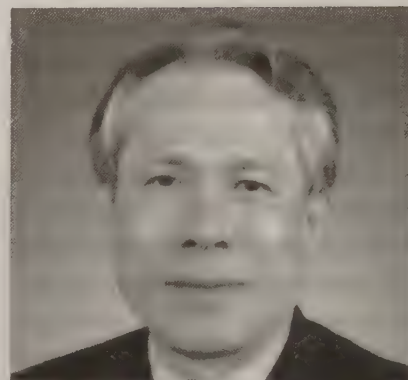
Indigenous Issues

Churches are to the forefront in Australia in addressing the issues of the indigenous people of the country. Anglican indigenous and non-indigenous leaders met recently to discuss issues

to be raised at next year's General Synod. The meeting brought together the Anglican Reconciliation Working Group and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Anglican Council and discussed draft resolutions on the stolen generations, mandatory sentencing and funding for indigenous ministries. *Southern Cross*

~ Korea ~

New PROK General Secretary



The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea at its September 2000 General Assembly elected Rev. Jong-Moo Kim as its new General Secretary. Rev. Jong-Moo Kim served as Acting General Secretary of PROK from December 1999 until September 2000, having held the position of Associate General Secretary for Programs from March 1999. He joined the PROK General Assembly office in 1972 as a program secretary and later became director of the Administration and Finance Department. He was commissioned twice as a PROK ecumenical coworker serving the Korean Christian Church in Japan. Rev. Kim undertook his theological studies at Hanshin University and Tokyo Theological Seminary.

~ Japan ~

Second Ecumenical Consultation on Student–Youth Christian Movement in Japan

Similar to the nature of the first consultation, which was coorganised with CCA-WSCF Joint Program in 1997, this Second Ecumenical Consultation on Student–Youth Christian Movement in Japan was organised 2–4 November 2000 at the YMCA Tozanso by the NCCJ Youth Committee, the Japan Student YMCA and the SCM Cooperation Committee, in cooperation with the Japan Anglican Youth Committee and the United Church of Christ in Japan Student Christian Fellowship.

One of the notable features of this consultation was that the participants (around forty of them) were much

younger than the first. While time was spent getting acquainted with each other's student and youth work, the consultation also agreed on the following directions:

- To continue the facilitation of the exchange of information among the different groups.
- To study and explore the possibility of setting up regional ecumenical meetings for different groups who are working in the same district.
- To explore cooperation in advocating a campaign on Japanese social issues.
- The urgent need to conduct ecumenical leadership formation for Japanese youth.
- To study perspectives and actions on common issues in solidarity with student and youth movements in other parts of Asia.

Cynthia Yuen



~ Malaysia/Singapore ~

Methodist Churches Elect Episcopal Heads

The Methodist Churches in Malaysia held the 7th Session of their General Conference in Kuching on 5–9 September 2000. Bishop Datuk Dr Peter Chio was re-elected as Moderator.

The Methodist Church in Singapore elected Bishop Dr Robert Solomon as its new episcopal head for the next quadrennium at the 7th session of its General Conference, held in Singapore 25–29 September 2000.

~ West Papua, Indonesia ~

Evangelical Christian Church 14th General Assembly

The Evangelical Christian Church in the Land of Papua held its 14th General Assembly 26 October – 3 November 2000 in Sorong, West Papua, under the theme 'Turn to God, Rejoice in Hope'. The Assembly was held in the context of the celebration of the forty-fourth anniversary of the Evangelical Christian Church and the 145th anniversary of the coming of Christianity to Papua. The opening of the Assembly was held in a sports stadium and was attended by thousands of people from the congregations. Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat, CCA Associate General Secretary, represented CCA at this important gathering to express the solidarity of Asian churches with the struggle of the church and the people of Papua.

The Assembly expressed its concerns related to the ongoing suffering

of the people of Papua and the violations of their human rights since they became part of Indonesia. They have suffered from many forms of atrocities, especially from the Indonesian military. People are constantly in fear. At the moment there is a deadlock, which may well lead to more violent actions and killings. In addition, the Assembly noticed the various problems faced by society, such as moral degradation, the spread of HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, lack of motivation to study among the children, violence against women, communal conflicts, corruption, collusion and nepotism among bureaucrats. Human resource development among the Papua people is considered urgent as the society enters the era of globalisation.

Further, the Assembly took note of the aspiration of the Papuan people for their political independence on one hand, and the reluctance of Indonesian government to grant them their independence on the other, a dilemma which has caused conflicts and violence actions in many parts of the land. In this light, the Assembly urged the leadership of the Evangelical Christian Church, in cooperation with other churches and Christian institutions in Papua, to be actively involved in a continuous dialogue with the Indonesian government for a just and peaceful settlement of the conflict in Papua. The Assembly also expressed the willingness of the church to work together with the government to promote justice and the welfare of the people of Papua. To achieve such a condition, the Assembly called for the good will of all parties involved to respect the dignity of the people of Papua.

On this occasion it was unani-

mously agreed to change the name of the church from the Evangelical Christian Church in Irian Jaya to its new name, the Evangelical Christian Church in the Land of Papua. Leadership elections were also held: Rev. Hermen Saud and Rev. Herman Anom were re-elected as Moderator and Vice Moderator of the church, and Rev. C. Berotabui was elected as the new General Secretary.

~ Malaysia ~

Communicating Love and Service

'A Renewed Church in Asia: Communicating Love and Service' was the theme of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Social Communication's annual Bishops' Meet, which brought together people in Christian media in the Catholic church in Asia. Geoff Alves, the editor of *CCA News*, represented CCA as part of the relationship that exists between FABC and CCA.

How we communicate Christian love and service was the basis of many of the presentations at the meeting, which was held at the Majodi Centre in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, at the invitation of Bishop James Chan of the Melaka-Johor diocese.

Allwyn Fernandes (below), the director of a communications company



in Mumbai, India, gave a thought-provoking presentation on the challenge for Christians communicating in Asia. What can the church offer Asia's billions? Allwyn described the new technological world. This is not decades away, he said, it is here now, and although it is providing hardship for many it is also providing new opportunities for people, especially the young, and the church in Asia.

Fr Jacob Srampickal, from Haryana in India, spoke on communicating love in Asia through films. He gave examples of films that show traditional Asian values, that can be used as a basis for discussion. Many of these are secular films that nevertheless have deep spiritual/Christian values embedded.

Another guest at the meeting was Fr Joseph Befe, the secretary of the Social Communication Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, who brought an African perspective to communication.

The participants learned that to communicate love and service to the peoples in Asia, communicators need to develop a personal relationship with God and their audience. Modern communication technologies are offering the church new ways of communicating the Good News, as well as increasing pastoral possibilities. A renewing church must use all forms of communication available, especially newly emerging technologies. However, all these new developments cannot substitute a living face-to-face dialogue.

On the final day of the meeting a pilgrimage was made to Malacca, to the Church of St Francis Xavier. St Francis Xavier made a number of trips to Malacca during his Asian missionary journeys, the first in 1545.

Joshua Russell Chandran

1918–2000

Dr J. Russell Chandran passed away on 27 September 2000. The following tribute has been paid to him by Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of WCC.

Dr Chandran will be remembered with gratitude by the world church for his far-reaching contributions to the ecumenical movement. He was vice-moderator of the WCC Central Committee 1966–1968, a period of critical importance in the life of the council. Its Fourth Assembly—held in Uppsala in 1968—was being organised at that time, and he played a key role in opening the way for new voices from third-world churches to be heard there.

Dr Chandran leaves behind many marks of an always passionate and creative commitment to the unity of the church. This was evident in the role he played, as convenor of the negotiations committee, in the union negotiations leading to the formation of the Church of South India in 1947. More recently, he was the first secretary of the Joint Council of the Church of South India, the Church of North India and the Mar Thoma Church. He served the WCC's Faith and Order Commission in various capacities for over twenty-five years, and was able to bring the Indian experience to other churches engaged in union negotiations, as well as contributing fresh and lively theological perspectives to the work of the Faith and Order as a whole.

Dr Chandran's contributions to Christian theology and his determined efforts to make third-world theologies visible, including his contribution to the foundation of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, will long be remembered. His efforts to build up the United Theological College (UTC) in Bangalore, India, also earned him deep respect and admiration. In 1954, when just 36 years of age, he was appointed as its first Indian principal. In that role, he was able to demonstrate the leadership capacity of Indian Christians in a newly independent country.

As president and member of the Senate of Serampore, Dr Chandran played a pivotal role in ensuring the high standards of excellence maintained by theological institutions in India. We in the ecumenical movement also remember with appreciation his contribution to the Pacific School of Theology in Suva, Fiji, after his retirement from UTC.

His theological work focused on how the Christian faith speaks in the multifaith context of our world today—a challenge we live with and learn from, even as we wrestle with rising religious fundamentalism and communalism in Asia and other parts of the world. As president of the Asian chapter of the Christian Peace Conference and through his active engagement in this global movement, Dr Chandran reflected admirably a deep commitment to his vision of the 'wholeness of God's creation'.

We thank God for the life and witness of this ecumenical leader and, with many ecumenical friends around the world, we express our deepest condolences to his wife Vicky Chandran and his two children and to the church in India.

Dr Chandran was born in South Tamil Nadu.

He had an MA in mathematics before studying theology in Bangalore, Oxford, New York and Chicago.

He earned his Doctor of Divinity from Serampore College. He was an ordained priest of the Church of South India and joined UTC as a professor in 1950.

He was the author of books, *Christian Ethics* and *Following Jesus* and numerous articles.

He called himself an evangelist. He once wrote, 'I regard myself as an evangelical in the sense that I believe the main mission of the church is to proclaim Jesus Christ as the good news to all people.'

He was also ecumenical. He represented CSI at ecumenical committees at home and abroad and was one of the founders of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians.

Vinod A.R. Peter

The Most Rev. Vinod Anand Rao Peter, Moderator of the Church of North India, President of the National Council of Churches in India, Chairman of the Leprosy Mission Trust India, and Chairman of the Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, died in a tragic car accident on 6 December 2000 about 10 km from Jodhpur.

He was travelling with the Rt Rev. Gerald Andrews, Bishop of the Rajasthan Diocese of CNI, who also died in the same accident.

Born on 3 March 1939 at Bhadravati, district Chandrapur, Maharashtra, India, Bishop Peter came from a humble, dedicated Christian family. He had his earlier education in Maharashtra, graduated from Hislop College, Nagpur, and was trained for the ministry at Bishop's College, Calcutta

in 1964–67, securing a BD degree. He was a dynamic youth leader and took an active part in the Student Christian Movement.

A pastor at heart Bishop Peter was always ready to reach out to the poorest of the poor. Since his ordination as a priest in 1967 in the Diocese of Nagpur he served in several pastorates in Nagpur and Bombay.

He was consecrated Bishop and appointed to the Diocese of Nagpur on 16 December 1984.

He was elected as the Moderator of the Church of North India on 12 October 1998 and was President of NCC India since March 2000. Bishop Peter was elected Chairman of Leprosy Mission Trust India this year.

Bishop Peter made tremendous contribution to the life and work of the churches in India and had been a

member of several ecumenical bodies both in India and abroad, particularly the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Communion.

He carried a deep concern for the unity and the vitality of the church as well as for the upliftment of the poor and downtrodden and marginalised people. He promoted numerous development programs both in his diocese and in the church at large.

He leaves behind his mother, wife Racheal, son Harshvardhan, daughter-in-law Arupa and a grandson and brothers and a sister. His untimely and tragic death is a great loss to the churches in India.

The funeral service of at Cathedral House, Nagpur, on 8 December 2000 was followed by a burial at Jaripatka cemetery, Nagpur.

Harold Williams

FEATURE

Before and after 1997

The Churches in Hong Kong

The Handover

Hong Kong Society

In 1996, while Hong Kong was still under the sovereignty of Britain, there was political uncertainty and an overcast future. Many foreign journalists and reporters painted a bleak picture of Hong Kong as if the 'handover' would be doomsday. From a political perspective the handover was smooth and the policy of 'One Country, Two Systems' seemed to be quite stable and was widely accepted by the people.

Hong Kong Churches

On 16 June 1997, the Executive Committee of the Hong Kong Christian Council unanimously passed a '1997 Handover Declaration', expressing the confidence, hope and commitment of Hong Kong Christians.

Crisis

Hong Kong Society

Economic Downfall and the Rich-Poor Gap

Instead of enjoying the political stability, Hong Kong people suffered greatly from the economic downfall that began in South East Asia in August 1997.

In two years the unemployment rate had increased to 6 per cent.

Although the situation is now improving, there are still 160,000 unemployed and wages have decreased. According to government statistics, 80 per cent of families in Hong Kong are now much poorer than before the handover. (In 1996 each family on average earned US\$526 per month, but in 1999, the 10 per cent of the lowest income families had only US\$385 per month to spend.)

Worse, more and more people have fallen into poverty, mainly the aged, the disabled, single-parent families and new arrivals from mainland China.

On the other hand, the 10 percent of the highest income families had US\$8,179 to spend every month in 1997 and the figure had increased to US\$8,974 in 1999. (The gini-coefficient index that shows that the gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen in the past twenty years in Hong Kong, from 0.373 in 1979, to 0.476 in 1991, to 0.52 in 1996, and is still growing.)

Right of Abode

In June 1999 there was a major debate on whether the Hong Kong Government should seek the judgment of the National People's Congress in Beijing for interpretation of the Basic Law on the Right of Abode. Due to reasons of limited resources and the heavy economic burden on public expenses, the Hong Kong Government decided to take the step to strictly control the quota of immigrants from mainland China, thereby not actively helping those who have the right to come to Hong Kong for family reunion reasons. Because of this decision, on 3 August 2000 some abode-seekers lit a fire in the Immigration Office in which two died.

Conflict between the Public and the Government

In order to maintain Hong Kong's leading status in the international commercial world, the Hong Kong SAR Govern-

Hong Kong Churches

Response to the Economic Crisis

Churches in Hong Kong as well as the people have faced a difficult situation in the past two years. Many Christian organisations expected a stable level of donations from individual Christians and local congregations, and now they are struggling.

However, churches in Hong Kong felt that they should express their solidarity with people who are going through hard times and try to share their concerns with them. In January 1999, the Hong Kong Christian Council issued a statement in response to the economic crisis, calling on the government, all churches, Christians and every citizen to work cooperatively in order to overcome problems and difficulties.

Uniting Together for a Future with Love

When Hong Kong was discussing whether the government should ask the National People's Congress in Beijing for interpretation of the Basic Law on the Right of Abode, Christians in Hong Kong felt that they must express their point of view.

In a statement, 'Uniting Together for a Future with Love', they urged all people in Hong Kong to rekindle a spirit of compassion and tolerance, be willing to share with others and advocate actions of love and concern. In addition, the HKCC openly declared that it did not agree with the way the government had handled this issue. It was felt its actions would damage the independence and the reputation of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's Court of Final Appeal and that it severely limited the autonomy of the Hong Kong judiciary system.

Protecting Youth from the Harm of Gambling and Pornography

The HKCC believes the service of the church represents God's love, and the voice of the church represents God's truth. So, in response to moves indicating an expansion of gambling, in December 1999 the council initiated action against it. This included publication of a statement, 'A Strong Demand to the Government: Protect Our Youth from the Harm of Gambling', in newspapers. It then organised 150 people,

Hong Kong Society

ment has been emphasising the importance of cost and effectiveness as top priorities. Hence many new policies, including medical, social welfare and educational, have been thrown out. People in Hong Kong understand reform is necessary. However government officials did not consult with the people of Hong Kong when they made decisions on the new policies. Thus conflicts were created, to the extent that even doctors, social workers and teachers demonstrated to protest against the new policies and the SAR government.

The Quality of the City

The Chief Executive of Hong Kong has clearly indicated that he wants to make Hong Kong an international city like London or New York. Therefore he presented new proposals and plans on information technology development, tourism, specialist training programs and environmental improvement. Note the stress on economic achievement, and that none of the plans touch on the spiritual or the quality of life of Hong Kong. There are many issues that must be tackled, e.g. a high divorce rate, family violence, young drug addicts, gambling.

If Hong Kong really wants to become an ideal city, besides material support it also needs something spiritual and moral. The most important asset of a city is its people. For a better Hong Kong there should be people who are not only well-trained, professionally equipped and capable of communicating with others, but who also have a good vision, moral consciousness and personal integrity.

From 'News and Views', Hong Kong Christian Council, Rev. Eric S.Y. So, General Secretary

Hong Kong Churches

made up of Christians, church ministers, parents and children, students and teachers, to present the statement as a petition to the Chief Executive of Hong Kong. Meanwhile the council was also involved in the anti-pornography movement with other Christian organisations and individual Christians.

Upholding the Moral Values of Society

The Protestant and Catholic church leaders made a joint declaration with other religious leaders of Hong Kong (Buddhist, Islamic, Confucian and Taoist) to encourage the public to give attention to Chinese culture and ethics. The declaration also reminded Hong Kong people not to put all their efforts on monetary achievements, but to think more about family relationships, moral values and humane attitudes.

The year 2000 has come. A new era always brings hope and opportunities to humanity. According to a survey from the Hong Kong Government, Hong Kong has gradually risen up from an economic bottom and is revitalising. Churches in Hong Kong will continue to play the role of prophet and servant for society as well as being light and salt. In the coming five to ten years, Hong Kong may well become one of the major metropolitan cities in Asia. There will be plenty of work for the churches of Hong Kong to do. They pray that God will give them wisdom, strength and vision so that they can continue to be a lamp to the city and shine before everyone in this world.

Hong Kong Church Statistics

Christian Population: Protestant 280,000, Catholic 250,000 (or 7.7 per cent of the total population of Hong Kong, not including 170,000–200,000 Filipino Christians, the majority of them overseas domestic helpers in Hong Kong)

Local Congregations: Protestant 1,100, Catholic 58, Orthodox 1
Education (Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary): Churches sponsor nearly 40 per cent of the total number of schools in Hong Kong

Social Service Centres: churches sponsor nearly 60 per cent of the social services of Hong Kong

Hospitals: 12 Christian hospitals

Theological Training: 19 theological and Bible colleges

Christian Organisations (including the Bible Society, Christian publishing houses, youth and student ministries, lay training, ministries to drug abusers, ministries to prisoners, etc): over 200

Protestant Denominations (those having more than six local congregations): over 60

Christian Ecumenical Organisations: Hong Kong Christian Council, Hong Kong Chinese Christian Churches Union